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# School Shootings and Principals' Perception of Armed Personnel in an Education Setting

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SCHOOL SHOOTINGS AND PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTION  
OF ARMED PERSONNEL IN AN EDUCATION SETTING

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

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2014

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES  
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Doctoral Candidate, **Richard Reyes**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ed.D. during this Fall Semester 2014.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the dilemma principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

The study looked at an urban school district with a marginalized community with low socioeconomic status as identified by the District Factor Group A. Twelve school principals were interviewed to gather information of their perceptions in relation to having armed personnel in their schools.

The literature on school shootings and armed personnel in schools was reviewed. The literature consisted of peer-reviewed articles, federal and state laws, and books and articles depicting the current state of school shootings.

Through the interviews conducted with the school principals, the study looked at the perception of the principals in regards to school safety, armed personnel, policies and procedures, mental health, communications between the stakeholders, and their concerns.

The results of the study provided valuable information to the researcher to allow for recommendations for future research, policy, and practice.

DEDICATED TO

JUDITH RIVERA RIOS

My favorite teacher, who from day one taught me to walk, talk, laugh, read, and write.

My favorite teacher, always there with her smile beaming of pride, her eyes filled with  
encouragement, and a heart full of joy.

My favorite teacher, always there with me.

My favorite teacher, Judy,

I dedicate this to you.

*“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken ones.”*

Frederick Douglass

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The decision to conduct a qualitative study about school shootings and armed personnel in an urban school district was a decision that I did not take lightly. Although it is a subject that is prominent in the minds of us all, I understood the study would be dealing with crime and education in a marginalized community, which would involve interviewing principals about their perspectives on faculty, teachers, students, and police officers.

For their enthusiastic participation I cannot thank the principals of the City of Paterson School District that volunteered to be interviewed enough. Their dedication to their faculty and students is second to none. Their honesty in their response to the interview questions was invaluable to the completion of this study.

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# **Chapter I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

We historically look at schools as a safe environment for the education of our children while away from home—a sanctuary of learning with faculty committed to our children’s safety. Acts continue to prove this true, as was the case in Sparks, Nevada, where a math teacher stood in the way of a 12-year-old student with a handgun to protect his students and as a result was shot and killed (Williams, 2013). However, when we learn of these horrific acts of violence perpetrated on school children, we are reminded of the violence that has become a part of our national discourse (James & McCallion, 2013).

In this environment of school shootings and the perception of the rise of school violence, we look at school administrators and school principals for guidance and assurance that our children will be safe; we cannot forget that the first responsibility of a school principal is to ensure the safety of our children (James & McCallion, 2013). School principals must address the need to ensure a safe and secure school environment for both students and faculty, at the same time ensuring that the educational setting will not be disrupted.

In the article “Perceptions of Violence,” Deborah Smith and Brian J. Smith (2006) report that school violence is a reflection of the neighborhood, and as such the crime is imported into the school. However, research has shown that students are safer at school than in their neighborhoods or even at home (Smith & Smith, 2006). The reports by the media on school violence continue to give the perception of schools as potential deadly environments as reflected by the incidents reported (Smith & Smith, 2006).

Studies have shown that school violence has a direct effect on education and affects the students' learning and the teachers' ability to teach, as well as having an effect on teacher retention. Students that have been victimized by school violence have reported "feelings of social isolation, depression, frustration, and poorer school attachment" (Johnson, 2009, p. 452).

School violence has also been identified as one of the major sources of teacher turnover (Smith & Smith, 2006). Teachers have listed the lack of support from the administration and poor security as well as the deteriorating conditions of schools as contributing to school violence (Johnson, 2009).

After the Active Shooter incident in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012, where 20-year-old Adam Lanza went into the Sandy Hook Elementary School and killed 20 first graders and six staff members before killing himself, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) issued their Active Shooter Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation, an updated edition to their 2010 report evaluating Active Shooter incidents (NYPD, 2010, 2012).

The New York City Police Department studied 324 Active Shooter cases from 1966 to 2012; of these 324 cases, 30 were in office buildings, 71 were in open spaces, 33 were in factories and warehouses, 130 were in schools, 93 resulted in school shootings and 60 were identified as having occurred in other locations; e.g., the Wisconsin Sikh Temple shooting on August 5, 2012, when Wade Michael Page shot 10 people, killing six and wounding four, including a responding police officer, before committing suicide (NYPD, 2010, 2012).

Of the active shooting incidents that were studied by the NYPD (2010, 2012), they identified that 38% of the active shooter incidents were of a personal nature between the victim and the shooter; 26% of the active shooter incidents had no connection between the victim and the shooter; 22% were in an academic setting; and 6% involved family disputes.

These acts of violence throughout the United States are not just statistical numbers to be examined, but real violence on children. Some acts that are perpetrated are children on children, striking at the very fear of each and every one of us.

In West Paducah, Kentucky, on December 1, 1997, 16-year-old Michael Carneal opened fire on a prayer group, killing three high school students (Holland, 2013). In Edinboro, Pennsylvania, on April 21, 1998, 14-year-old Andrew Wurst opened fire at his eighth grade dance and killed a teacher (Hays, 1999). In Springfield, Oregon, on May 21, 1998, 15-year-old Kip Kinkel killed both his parents and killed two students in a shooting spree at the Thurston High School cafeteria (Verhovek, 1999). In Pearl, Mississippi, on October 1, 1997, 16-year-old Luke Woodham walked into Pearl High School and with his hunting rifle killed two students (Sack, 1997). In Jonesboro, Arkansas, on March 1, 1998, 11-year-old Andrew Golden and 14-year-old Mitchell Johnson shot and killed four girls and a teacher in a middle school as they fired from nearby woods (Bragg, Johnson, Kifner, Verhovek, Kifner, 1998). All of these shootings throughout the United States occurred two years prior to the April 20, 1999, Columbine High School shootings, Littleton, Colorado, where 18-year-old Eric Harris and 17-year-old Dylan Klebold shot and killed 12 students and one teacher before committing suicide (Cullen, 2009).

Columbine became the catalyst that moved policymakers to change the rules of engagement for law enforcement when confronting an active shooter. Prior to Columbine, police officers were instructed to take cover and concealment as they contained the situation. Strentz (2012) referred to the first responder attempt to isolate, confine, and evaluate a situation. However, since Columbine, the paradigm has shifted to immediate entry to neutralize the active shooter as he or she continues to kill or injure people.

Since Columbine in 1999, there have been countless school shootings: an Amish school in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania; Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia; Delaware State University, Dover, Delaware; Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois; South Mountain Community College in Phoenix, Arizona; University of Central Arkansas in Conway, Arkansas; Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia; University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; and most recently in Newtown, Connecticut, where 20-year-old Adam Lanza went into the Sandy Hook Elementary School and killed 20 first graders and six staff members before killing himself (Barron, 2012).

Since the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting, there have been over 14 active shooter incidents in our schools. On October 21, 2013, at Sparks Middle School, Sparks, Nevada, at 7:15 am a 12-year-old student came into the courtyard with a gun and shot and killed Michael Landsberry as the math teacher was protecting the other students (Williams, 2013). This was followed on December 13, 2013, at Arapahoe High School in Colorado, at 12:30 p.m., when 18-year-old Karl Pierson fired five times with a shotgun, killing Claire Davis, age 17, before killing himself (Southall, 2013).

However, not all school violence involves a firearm; on April 9, 2014, at Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, Pennsylvania, a 16-year-old sophomore student, Alex Hribal, used two eight-inch knives he acquired from his kitchen, and slashed and stabbed 21 students and a security guard before being tackled by an assistant principal (“Search for motive,” 2014; Walsh, 2014).

School principals and administrators must be aware of how dynamic and fast an incident of an active shooter could be. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported that of the 35 incidents in 2012 of an Active Shooter, 37% ended within five minutes, while 63% ended in less than 15 minutes. However, when law enforcement arrives at the scene, the shooter often stops and engages the law enforcement officer. The FBI reported that one-third of the officers that confronted the perpetrator during an active shooter incident were shot (Schweit, 2013).

As a result of the shootings in the Sandy Hook Elementary, school districts today are budgeting money to hire school police officers or security guards with the intention to keep students and faculty safe (Molner, 2013). Law enforcement and school officials, working together, must address the need to acquire knowledge to be able to conduct a threat assessment on individuals that show signs of being or becoming threats to the school.

The United States Secret Service developed a school threat assessment based on six key principles:

1. Violence is not unpredictable or spontaneous; therefore, information about the student, as well as the pupil’s behavior, can prevent violence.

2. Information should include knowledge about the student, environment, specific situation, and target of the violence.
3. All information should be verifiable and reliable.
4. Authorities should leave out assumptions or subjective impressions about the student's personality or other characteristics and instead base evaluation on facts and observable behaviors. The warning signs should be used more as guidelines than absolutes.
5. Multiple sources of information (e.g., other students, teachers, faculty, and parents) should be obtained.
6. Conclusions should support the facts as to whether the student poses a threat, not necessarily whether the individual made a threat. Also assessments should include considerations of whether the subject has the means and intent to carry it out. (Booth, Van Hasselt, and Vecchi, 2011, pp. 5-6).

Law enforcement and school personnel together must train to be effective in identifying and dealing with potential threats, whether the threats are internal or external. School principals are entrusted to ensure that the educational environment is safe for both students and faculty, as well as to encourage a healthy learning environment. However, there are limited data on the effect of armed personnel on the safety of students and faculty or on the possible disruption that armed personnel will have on education (James & McCallion, 2013; Smith & Smith, 2006). School administrators and principals are left to make these decision based on limited information; much of the information is provided by the media and may not be reliable or able to give the needed information to make the

appropriate decisions on protecting the students and faculty while protecting the educational integrity of the academic institution.

### **Problem Statement**

In a Gallup Poll of district superintendents on the topic of “what superintendents really think,” taken on July 10, 2013, one of the issues addressed was school safety, specifically armed personnel within their school district (Maxwell, 2013, p. 1). The Gallup/*Education Week* Poll asked superintendents, “Does your school district have armed security personnel or police officers in the school?” Sixty-two percent of the superintendents answered they had no armed personnel. The 62% of the superintendents who answered “no” were then asked, “If the answer was ‘no,’ has your school district considered armed security personnel or police officers in school?” Twenty-eight percent of these superintendents answered “yes,” they were considering armed personnel (Maxwell, 2013, p. 2).

Since the December 2012 mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, Washington lawmakers have regained an interest in school resource officers (SROs), (James & McCallion, 2013). In contrast, on June 26, 2013, while giving an interview to NJ 101.5, a New Jersey radio station, Governor Chris Christie was asked by a caller about the decision of the town of Westfield, New Jersey, to hire armed police officers in schools. Governor Christie replied, “I don’t think that we need to have armed police officers in schools, and I don’t think it’s a great atmosphere for children to see an armed person walking around the school.” Governor Christie added that his statement is based on his law enforcement experience (Wright-Piersanti, 2013, p. 1).



This debate continues throughout the educational and law enforcement community. In Little Falls, New Jersey, the principal at Passaic Valley High School, a retired Little Falls police officer, has been allowed by the board of education to carry a concealed weapon in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting (Pappas, 2013). In Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, the chief of police, an advocate for armed retired police officers to work in the school district, made a presentation to the school board for the hiring of two retired officers. The New Jersey School Boards Association came out against having armed personnel in schools, citing other possible solutions that are more cost effective; however, they do support having police officers, SROs in the schools (Doblin, 2013).

There are multiple views on dealing with the problem of school violence and the prospect of having armed personnel in the schools. While Governor Christie of New Jersey is in opposition to armed personnel in schools (Wright-Piersanti, 2013, p. 1), President Barak Obama has requested an additional \$150 million to be added to the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant to hire more school resource officers (SROs), a new type of hybrid police, teacher, and correction officer, with expanding roles of problem solving and crime prevention more so than criminal apprehension. If properly selected and trained, SROs may be effective problem solvers (James & McCallion, 2013).

The Congressional Resource Service Report on School Resource Officers (2013) reported that administrators were opposed to the SRO program because it cast a negative light on school safety and interfered with the education process, while police officers saw the SRO program as a tool in public safety.

However, having armed personnel in schools, specifically law enforcement, brings with it an entirely different challenge. In a national survey of schools, the schools with SROs experienced greater police involvement than schools without the SROs (James & McCallion, 2013). However, a separate study found that “schools that added SROs did not have a lower number of reported serious violent, non-serious violent, or property crimes. However, schools that added SROs had a higher number of reported weapon and drug offenses” (James & McCallion, 2013, p. 23).

A study conducted by Mayer and Leone (as cited in Johnson, 2009) found that middle and high school students perceived the school to have significantly more violence due to presence of school security personnel, not unlike Kelling and Wilson’s (1982) “broken window theory,” in which they opine that a neighborhood that is allowed to go into disarray will bring upon itself further deterioration due to the fact that it will be acceptable as part of the environmental culture.

While the debate continues, there are other factors that superintendents and principals must address when dealing with school violence and having armed personnel in schools. Just as the school children must feel safe and secure to encourage an educational environment, so must the faculty. A national survey of schools and law enforcement agencies resulted in principals and law enforcement having different views on the need for SROs. Only 4% answered that violence was the reason for having SROs in schools (James & McCallion, 2013).

In her review of the literature on school violence, Johnson (2009) found that creating a safe environment through student-teacher relationships, positive school interaction, and an orderly environment with rules that the students believe to be fair, is

more conducive to an educational setting than other security methods such as armed personnel.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the dilemma principals face in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education. Maslow's *Theory of Human Behavior* provides an insight into this dilemma.

The dilemma for school principles may revolve around the question of whether armed personnel fulfill the basic needs of safety and security, or do they create a perception that is the opposite of a safe and secure environment?

There are limited data on the effect of armed personnel relative to the safety of students and faculty or on the possible disruption that armed personnel may have on education (James & McCallion, 2013; Smith & Smith, 2006). SROs are a new type of hybrid police, teacher, and correction officer, with expanding roles of problem solving and crime prevention more so than criminal apprehension. If properly selected and trained, SROs may be effective problem solvers (James & McCallion, 2013).

Still, the Congressional Resource Service Report on School Resource Officers (2013) added that there are very little data on the issue of SROs, and that the research is limited.

Very little research has been done on school shootings and armed personnel in schools; the limited available research has focused on suburban schools, based on the high percentage of rampage shootings that have been occurring predominately in suburban or rural school districts (Newman, Fox, Harding, Mehta, & Ruth, 2004). Urban

school shooting research has been limited to the perception that school shootings are a result of a violent neighborhood or violent culture (Smith & Smith, 2006), unlike the studies conducted on active shooters or rampage shootings.

After the July 20, 2012, Aurora, Colorado, active shooter incident, where 24-year-old James Holmes killed 12 people and wounded 58 at a midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*, a sequel to the Batman movies (Frosch & Johnson, 2012), the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Johns Hopkins University convened a national summit of law enforcement and academic experts to review “strategic approaches to preventing multiple casualty violence” (USDOJ, 2013, p. 1). The summit took place in Glynco, Georgia, on December 11 and ended on the December 13, one day before the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

The one thing that all the body of research regarding active shooters and rampage shootings has identified is that the body of research is limited (Booth et al., 2011; James & McCallion, 2013; Newman et al., 2004; NYPD, 2010, 2012; Smith & Smith, 2006; USDOJ, 2013). There is even less research on the decisions school administrators, specifically principals, must make regarding the safe and secure environment of their schools and how these factors affect the learning environment as well as the students and faculty.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do inner city school principals perceive the safety threat to be from within the school or outside the school?
2. How do school principals in one urban New Jersey school district address school safety for the students and faculty?

3. How do inner city school principals perceive the presence, or knowledge, of armed personnel as influencing, or deterring, potential school violence?
4. Do school principals perceive students and faculty to be safer with armed personnel present within the school, or do they perceive armed personnel to create a threatening environment?

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study explored the dilemma principals face in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education. In doing so, multiple theories were reviewed, for a clearer understanding of the difficult conundrum placed on school principals.

School safety and an environment conducive to learning are the two most critical issues identified in this study, in the theories purported by Abraham H. Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* and Clayton Alderfer's ERG (Existence, Relatedness, Growth) Theory. Maslow believed in order for an individual to reach self-actualization the individual had to first have acquired four other needs, which he espoused in his *Hierarchy of Needs*. Clayton Alderfer's ERG (Existence, Relatedness, Growth) Theory offers a different perspective; whereas Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* requires basic needs to be fulfilled before moving onto the higher needs, Alderfer's ERG Theory allows for multiple needs to be achieved without one having to precede the other. (More, Vito, & Walsh, 2012).

Principals must then look at the students and faculty needs and determine if the basic needs, as prescribed by Maslow and Alderfer have been met to allow for the higher order needs to be reached.

It is just as important to view this study through the understanding of critical theory and postmodernism. Postmodernism is the belief that there are no constant truths; reality is subjective, constructed by a person's past and present personal experiences (Webb et al., 2010). Postmodernism is cynical of science and the scientific method as prescribed in the modernist theory (Schmallegger, 2011). Critical theory is based on the study and critique of our current institutions and the knowledge of who has the power in these institutions. Identifying the power and challenging the power is at the very core of critical theory (Webb et al., 2010).

Postmodernism suggests that the purpose for our schools is to prepare students to question the suggested norms of society and to be aware that certain groups have been "excluded, marginalized, and exploited." Students have the right, and should be encouraged, to state their opinion on existing institutions. Whether they be political, economical, social, or educational, they need to be critiqued, need to be challenged (Webb et al., 2010, p. 87). Around the world schools are taking a postmodern approach, allowing schools and their curriculum to have a greater understanding and embrace diverse cultures and different point of views (Parkay, Hass, & Anctil, 2010).

### **Design and Methodology**

As part of the research into the perceptions of principals on having armed personnel in an educational setting, the methodology the researcher decided to use in this qualitative study relies on postmodernism and critical theory, with the research focused

on individuals that have experienced social inequalities (Bogden & Biklen, 2007), individuals that have been “excluded, marginalized, and exploited” in our society (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2010, p. 87).

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with semi-structured open-ended questions of the participants (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). The questions were designed based on the review of the current literature. A panel of experts, consisting of three subject matter experts, was assembled to ensure the validity of the questions used in the study. As a result of the data collected, all questions and answers given during the interviews were transcribed for the participants’ review and approval for validity and to ensure accuracy (Creswell, 2009).

For this study the researcher interviewed 12 elementary school principals/vice principals within the urban school district of the City of Paterson, New Jersey. Elementary schools within the City of Paterson are smaller, allowing the principals/vice principal to have greater contact with the students, staff, and the community.

The City of Paterson School District was selected for its size as a medium city in the United States with 145,219 residents, a median salary of \$33,583, and a population of 27.6% living in poverty, compared to 9.9% statewide (U.S. Census, 2012).

The research design was prepared to allow the researcher to identify the participants, location, and an area for interviewing, to allow for a structured research (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). This research study looked at the perceptions of principals on having armed personnel in an educational setting in District Factor Group (DFG) A high schools, specifically the City of Paterson, New Jersey.

As a result of the data collected through the interviews with the school principals, the data were coded to organize the material by sections that could be identified from the responses (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009).

Creswell (2009) recommends that the data are to be organized for analysis and coded by sections, allowing the narrative of the study to convey the findings of the data analyzed to be able to ask, “What were the lessons learned?” (p. 189).

A letter requesting permission to conduct this study was submitted to the superintendent’s office of the City of Paterson School District. With the approval of the superintendent’s office, a request for permission to conduct this study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Seton Hall University; any research involving human subjects must get an IRB approval if the data are not public (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). No action was taken regarding this research without the consent of the IRB at Seton Hall University and the City of Paterson School District, where the research was conducted.

The Paterson School District has 38 elementary schools, spread out throughout the six wards of the City of Paterson. Four of the 38 elementary schools are identified as academies, and four are dedicated to kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students (Paterson Public Schools, 2013). The 12 principals/vice principals selected for the study were chosen from two schools from each ward to better represent the City of Paterson, which in turn is an acceptable representation from the available crime data of the City of Paterson, submitted annually to the Uniform Crime Report (UCR).

An Introduction/Consent letter was sent to all elementary principals/vice principals asked to participate in this study; the Introduction/Consent letter explained the



research to be conducted, along with its purpose, and the estimated amount of time necessary for completing the study.

The Introduction/Consent letter further provided the principals/vice principals a statement of data confidentiality, which included participants' identifying characteristics that would remain confidential. Furthermore, only the principal researcher had access to the data, which remained secured in a locked secured desk at his place of employment, the Paterson Police Department.

The Introduction/Consent letters to the participants, along with the cover letter to the City of Paterson School District superintendent, and the thank you letters to all participants at the end of the study, are included as appendices to the research study.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study examined the perceptions that school principals in inner city schools have regarding having armed personnel within their school and their perception towards how armed personnel affect the learning environment for both students and faculty. Although there has been much written and researched about school violence, there are scant data on the effect of armed personnel in schools.

This study examined the literature on school violence and the debate on armed personnel in schools. School administrators, specifically school principals, have to make decisions that affect the safety of the students and faculty, as well as ensuring a conducive learning environment. This is all done in a society of conflicting beliefs regarding the legal ownership of handguns versus the threat imposed by these very gun issues, as shown in all the school shootings that continue to occur.

Using the philosophical concepts of postmodernism and critical theory, this study examined the role of the principal to ensure, if possible, that all cultures are represented in a safe and secure learning environment and not disenfranchised.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

There are several delimitations that can be identified in this study:

1. Qualitative research based on data gathered from interviews of 12 school principals/vice principals.
2. Location of the interviews and the personnel to be interviewed; one inner city school located in the state of New Jersey, a northeastern area of the United States
3. Interview questions based on the conceptual framework of postmodernism and critical theory.

There are several limitations that can be identified in this study:

1. The sample size of 12 principals/vice principals limits the study to the perception of a few education administrators.
2. The location of the school in which the principals are employed limits the study to principals of inner city schools located in the state of New Jersey, a northeastern area of the United States.
3. Due to the different laws and attitudes throughout the country regarding the ownership and possession of handguns, the information gathered is limited to the perspective of a specific segment of the American population.

## Definition of Terms

***Active Shooter*** is the term used for a person who enters into a location where multiple people are assembled and begins to shoot or harm indiscriminately all the people in his or her way.

***Armed Personnel*** could be any person or persons authorized by law to carry a concealed or exposed weapon. Armed personnel could be a police officer, an armed security guard, retired police officer, armed teacher/principal.

***HTV*** is an acronym for Hybrid Targeted Violence. Due to the recent active shooter incidents, the term *hybrid targeted violence* has been used to identify an individual or individuals causing an act of violence upon a specifically identified group with a combination of lethal weapons.

***DFG*** is an acronym for District Factor Group, the classification of New Jersey schools by their socioeconomic status.

***Leakage*** is the communication of an individual to a third party of the individual's intent to do harm to another person.

***Moral Panic*** is when a substantial portion of society believes that particular evildoers pose a threat to the moral order of society.

***Principal*** is the person in charge of the school, responsible for the safety and education of all the students as well as the safety of the school faculty. The school principal is also in charge of ensuring an environment that is conducive to learning by all the students.

***Rampage Shootings*** are defined by the fact that they involve attacks on multiple parties, selected almost at random.

***School*** is defined as public or private institution of learning, which includes school property, school buildings, school libraries, school buses, and other areas used for learning, or associated with an institution of learning.

***SES*** is an acronym for socioeconomic status. Students are often affected by their socioeconomic status through poverty or wealth, and as a result their SES affects their educational opportunities.

***SRO*** is an acronym for school resource officer. It is a police officer assigned to work within a school, to work with students and faculty to bridge law enforcement and education. SROs may be funded through school or police budget or through federal grants.

### **Summary**

Throughout the chapter, school violence and the impact it has on education was reviewed through the perspective of school shootings and a school principal's responsibility to secure a safe environment for the students and faculty, as well as to provide an environment conducive to a proper education. The problem statement was described along with the purpose of the study, which led to the research questions of the study. Using postmodernism and critical theory as the conceptual framework of the study, the design and methodology was reviewed and the significance of the study identified, as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study and the definition of terms used.

## **Chapter II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Often when we think of school shootings we are transported back to April 20, 1999, Littleton, Colorado, at Columbine High School, when 18-year-old Eric Harris and 17-year-old Dylan Klebold shot and killed 12 students and one teacher before committing suicide (Cullen, 2009). This one incident changed the fabric of education, school safety, and law enforcement response to school shootings. Or more recently, we think of December 14, 2012, and Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where Adam Lanza shot his way into the school, was confronted by the school principal Dawn Hochsprung and school psychologist Mary Sherlach, whom Lanza shot and killed. As he proceeded down the hallway, he shot and killed 20 first-grade school children and four faculty members (Sedensky, 2013).

Moms Demand Action, a citizen group created after the Newtown shooting, and Mayors Against Illegal Guns have completed a joint analysis of school shootings that occurred after Newtown from December 15, 2012, to February 10, 2014. They found that during the 14 month period analyzed there had been 44 school shootings throughout the United States (Pilkington, 2014).

Prior to Columbine, the police response to a school shooting or any other active shooter (the term now used) was to isolate, evacuate, and negotiate (W. G. Fraher, personal communication, January 7, 2014). At Columbine High School, police officers responded, assisted the students and staff that were evacuating, secured the scene and remained outside preparing to negotiate, as per their training (Cullen, 2009). Since the

Columbine High School shooting, the education and law enforcement community have come together to address the response to mass shooters by introducing Active Shooter, which redefined law enforcement response to a mass killing (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

However, the school shooting at Columbine High School was not the first or the most horrific. The May 18, 1927, school bombing at Bath Township, Michigan, resulted in the death of 38 school children and six adults (Dotinga, 2012). The perpetrator of the school bombing was 55-year-old Bath Township school board treasurer, Andrew Kehoe, who killed his wife, bombed his home, and bombed the Bath school before committing suicide by blowing himself up in his truck (Bernstein, 2009), resulting in becoming the deadliest mass murder at a school in American history (Dotinga, 2012).

As a result of these tragedies that have occurred and the demand for school safety, the National Center for Education Statistics has estimated that as of the 2009-2010 school year, one-third of all schools had armed personnel (Wilson, 2013).

This study explored the dilemma principals face in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education. A review of the current literature was examined to identify the information available to school administrators, principals, and law enforcement to allow all personnel that may be involved in school safety have sufficient and adequate information to make the best decisions in accomplishing a safe and secure school environment.

### **Literature Search Methods**

A review of the literature regarding school shootings and the perception principals in an urban environment have towards the proposition of armed personnel within the

school are included in this study to further the research and knowledge of school violence.

In conducting the search for information on school shootings, the Seton Hall Library and the internet were accessed for online databases to include, but not be limited to, EBSCO, ProQuest, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and LexisNexis, with the following keywords: school shootings, school violence, school environment, school resource officers, active shooter, and gun laws. Further information was accessed through the review of federal and state laws, news media reports, peer-reviewed articles, books, research on school violence and government reports.

### **Criteria for Inclusion in the Search**

The information reviewed for this study was limited to the following literature:

- Federal and state legislation and policies that are currently in place, as well as recommended legislation and policies that may affect armed personnel in an education environment.
- News media articles; used solely for the purpose of presenting the information of the incident, school shootings, as portrayed during the time of the incident, and the information received immediately after the incident.
- Peer-reviewed articles to show the academic information regarding school shootings; school principals' response to school violence; armed personnel in schools, to include school resource officers.
- Books written by subject matter experts on school shootings, active shooters, hostage negotiations, human behavior, and violence.

- Current research that is significant to the subject of school shootings and armed personnel in schools.
- Policy papers and government reports related to education, schools, school shootings, school security, law enforcement officers, school resource officers, and school personnel.

## **Relevant Literature**

### **Federal and State Laws**

When dealing with the subject of school shootings and armed personnel in an educational setting, it is imperative to identify the federal, state, and local laws that guide school principals and administrators. Their decisions on how best to approach the delicate and often political decisions related to school shootings and armed personnel, is often guided by high profile incidents, such as the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14, 2012. These high profile incidents, fueled by the media attention, brought about a national debate on firearms restriction (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014).

In 1994 the United States Congress found that violent crime in schools and on school grounds has had an effect on the quality of education, causing a decline in the educational system (Cornell University Law, 2012). As a result, the U.S. Congress passed 18 USC 922, the Gun Free School Act (GFSA), in an effort to assist states and local school districts to deal with the rise in violent gun crime. The GFSA states, “. . . school systems find it almost impossible to handle gun-related crime by themselves.” The GFSA required all schools that receive federal funds to have a state law by October 20, 1995, that prohibits any person to be in or on school property with a weapon without having proper legal authorization and requires the law to provide for the suspension for



minimum of a year, of any student or students carrying a weapon in a school or on school property, and the student must be referred to law enforcement” (Cornell University Law, 2012; Newman et al., 2004).

In 2002 the GFSA was amended under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to define the term *weapon* to mean a firearm. The updated GFSA also allowed the zero tolerance provision of the 1994 law, to permit the school principals and administrators to modify an expulsion for a student, in writing, on a case-by-case basis (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

The GFSA does provide for individuals that are qualified under the state law and contracted by the schools to carry firearms; i.e., security personnel, to possess and carry a firearm in schools or on school property under the state statute. This provision of the law also allows for law enforcement officers to be in possession of a firearm when the law enforcement officer is acting in his or her official capacity (Cornell University Law, 2012).

New Jersey State law regarding a person having a firearm in or on school property is specific, requiring the person to have written authorization from the governing officer:

2C:39-5. Unlawful possession of weapons.

e. Firearms or other weapons in educational institutions.

(1) Any person who knowingly has in his possession any firearm in or upon any part of the buildings or grounds of any school, college, university or other educational institution, without the written authorization of the governing officer of the institution, is guilty of a crime of the third degree, irrespective of whether

he possesses a valid permit to carry the firearm or a valid firearms purchaser identification card (Gann, 2014, p. 195).

The State of New Jersey is allowed to provide the citizens of New Jersey greater protection under the law regarding firearms in schools or school grounds through the process of “new federalism,” which is the process in which the states are allowed to give their citizens greater protection under the state constitution than the federal constitution provides; however, the state constitution cannot give less protection than the federal law under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment (Holtz, 2014, p. v).

In New Jersey the law restricting firearms in school settings makes it a crime of the third degree; and it specifically states that the sentence “ . . . shall be fixed by the court and shall be between three years and five years” (Gann, 2014, p. 223).

The New Jersey law gives the school principal or the school district superintendent the legal right to decide, through written authorization, who is authorized to carry a firearm on school property. This authorization, although specified in the state law, does not supersede the federal provision that the person carrying the firearm must be qualified under the state law (Cornell University Law, 2012); in New Jersey the law requires that any person carrying a firearm must have applied to the New Jersey Superior Court, with a petition for judicial approval (Gann, 2014).

Federal and New Jersey laws do have exceptions for law enforcement to carry weapons in schools, but both laws address the issue allowing the presence of firearms on school property when the law enforcement officers are on official duty in their law enforcement role (Cornell University Law, 2012; Gann, 2014). In New Jersey, under the Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials (2011),

the Attorney General’s Office specifies the police response: “Except when responding to an emergency, no on-duty police officer will enter any school building without first complying with the procedures established by the school for the reporting of visitors” (p. 111). However, any New Jersey law enforcement officer, under N.J.S.A 2C: 39-6 Exemptions, is allowed on duty and off duty to carry firearms legally throughout the state, except inside a casino (L. E. Holtz, personal communications, March 19, 2014).

Through the GFSA the federal law requires that in each state in which school districts receive federal funding, the state must pass a law prohibiting firearms on school property, but school administrators can allow personnel that are contracted to carry firearms (USDOE, n.d.); in New Jersey the contracted personnel must have written authorization to carry firearms; therefore, the decision of having armed school personnel—barring politics, local policy, or board of education—is the school principal’s or superintendent’s decision (Cornell University Law, 2012; Gann, 2014).

New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:16) Programs to Support Student Development specifically identify legislative action regarding school students and the possession and/or use of firearms.

N.J.A.C. 6A:16 creates policies and procedures to comply with the federal law, GFSA, regarding the removal of students for firearm offenses and the reporting of such offenses to law enforcement (N.J.A.C. 6A:16, n.d.). As referred to earlier, the GFSA had a zero policy provision which was amended in 2002 under NCLB, to allow school principals and school administrators to modify the removal of a student on a case-by-case basis (Cornell University Law, 2012).

Roxie Alcaraz, Tia Kim, and Erin Wolbeck (2010) of the Southern California Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention found that schools with a zero tolerance policy are shown to be less safe than schools that allow the principals the necessary discretion to handle each incident on a case-by-case basis.

N.J.A.C. 6A: 16-5.5 provides guidance for the school principal or superintendent on the notification of the student's parents to include informing the parents of the circumstances associated with the removal of the student from the school: notification of the parent that law enforcement was informed of the incident, notification of the parents of the location of their child, specifically if the child is in custody of law enforcement and where, and the notification of the parents of the student's due process under the law (N.J.A.C. 6A: 16, n.d.).

In the review of the federal and state laws as well as school policies, school principals and school administrators must be cognizant of the constitutional rights that protect the students. When weighing the importance of a person's civil liberties with the security and safety of an institution, its students, their parents, and faculty, the courts have ruled students have a constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression as long as the speech does not disrupt or affect the rights of others (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014).

Students' rights are protected under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA). FERPA prohibits the release of students' academic and disciplinary records, while HIPAA prohibits the release of students' medical information. These student records are limited to only persons that have a legitimate right to know. FERPA and HIPAA do have

provisions within the laws that allow for the disclosure of information in an emergency situation or when public safety is an issue (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.).

New Jersey statutory requirements (2A: 4A-60) in the protection of juvenile records allow for specific circumstances when juvenile records can be available to be disclosed (Gann, 2014). The law protects juveniles that have gone through the juvenile system, as a delinquent or through intervention, not to have their information made public. The statute has specific guidance on what individuals or institutions may have access to, based on their needs and care for the juvenile (Holtz, 2014).

Holtz (2014) has identified five provisions to the New Jersey law regarding the disclosure of juvenile information: (1) For juveniles that are taken into custody by law enforcement for an investigative purpose, the school principal may be informed of the identity of the juvenile when school order or discipline is required; however, no written document of the juvenile in custody is permitted (2A: 4A-60e); (2) When a juvenile is placed under arrest or if a warrant is issued to arrest the juvenile, the identity of the juvenile may be released to the public if necessary to make the arrest (2A: 4A-60b); (3) When a juvenile is charged with a delinquent act or referred to a crisis intervention unit, law enforcement are required to provide records of the incident and charges to the parent, guardian, or attorney of the juvenile (2A: 4A-60a.(3)); (4) When a juvenile is charged with a delinquent act, or adjudicated of a delinquent act, law enforcement are required, upon request, to provide records of the incident and charges to the parents, guardian, or attorney of the juvenile, as well as the school principal of the school the juvenile attends or where the juvenile is the victim. Furthermore, in regard to a school principal, this

provision of the law could be pre-arranged in the memorandum agreement between law enforcement and education (2A: 4A-60c); (5) When a juvenile is charged with a delinquent act, or adjudicated of a delinquent act, law enforcement are required to send a written notice of the juvenile's identity, incident, and charges to the principal of the school the juvenile attends if the offense was committed on school property, involves school employee, the arrest was based on information from the school, or if the crime was a first, second, or third degree, involving a death, attempted death, conspiracy, weapons charge, illegal drugs, or bias crime (2A: 4A-60d).

### **First Amendment right to free speech.**

School principals and school administrators find themselves in a quandary when maneuvering through the legalities of student privacy and student safety. Katherine S. Newman, a professor at Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, with a team of researchers, Cybelle Fox, Daniel J. Harding, Jal Mehta, and Wendy Roth (2004), studied the rampage school shootings in West Paducah, Kentucky, and Jonesboro, Arkansas.

On December 1, 1997, at Heath High School, West Paducah, Kentucky, 17-year-old Michael Carneal pulled out a firearm and opened fire at the Heath High School prayer group, consisting of 20–30 students, killing three girls and wounding five. On March 24, 1998, at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, 11-year-old Andrew Golden pulled the school fire alarm causing the students and teachers to exit the building. After pulling the fire alarm Andrew Golden exited the building and proceeded to join 13-year-old Mitchell Johnson, who was lying in the wooded area with the rifles preparing to shoot

the students as they exited. Eleven-year-old Andrew Golden and 13-year-old Mitchell Johnson killed five students and wounded ten (Newman et al., 2004).

Katherine S. Newman and her team of researchers (2004), through their study of rampage school shootings, were able to identify five areas of concern regarding the school shooter. However, one of the areas they identified regarding the schools and faculty is the need for the sharing of information of students throughout the educational system, which will help to identify students that have had behavioral and disciplinary problems.

Newman et al. (2004) recommends that by intercepting threats and addressing the threats in a comprehensive manner is the “most promising answer for prevention of school shootings” (p. 288). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), through their research, identified that the more specific the threat, the more serious is the possibility of the threat being carried out; the more specific the threat, the more dangerous the threat, especially if the information is specific to dates, times, weapons to be used, or person or place targeted (Newman et al., 2004).

The First Amendment (the right to free speech) protects all American citizens, including school students (*NJ School Search Policy Manual*, 1998). However, the courts have ruled that not all communication is free speech.

In *United States v. Orozco-Santilla* (1990), the courts used the following statements to provide for an objective standard in determining the intent of the communication: (1) “whether a reasonable person would foresee that the statement would be interpreted by those to whom the maker communicates the statement as a serious expression of intent to harm or assault” and (2) “Alleged threats should be considered in

light of their entire factual context, including surrounding events and [the] reaction of the listeners” (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014, p. 72).

In *Lovell by and through Lovell v. Poway Unified School District* (1996), the Ninth Circuit Court ruled that a 15-year-old student from Mt. Carmel High School in Poway, California, who had made threats to shoot the guidance counselor, was not protected under the constitution (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014).

In *LaVine v. Blaine School District* (2001), an eleventh grader’s poem required action by the school district to temporarily expel the student, and send him for a psychiatric evaluation. The family of LaVine sued the school district, and the Ninth Circuit Court looked at the “totality of the relevant facts” and found that the school district did not violate LaVine’s free speech provision of the First Amendment. The court ruled, “Taken together and given the backdrop of actual school shootings, we hold that these circumstances were sufficient to have led school authorities reasonably to forecast substantial disruption of or material interference with school activation—specifically, that James was intending to inflict injury upon himself or others” (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014, p. 72).

However, in *D.G. v. Independent School District No. 11* (2000) where a student had written a poem titled “Killing Mrs. [Teacher]” and the school district moved to expel the student as a result of the poem, the courts ruled that the school district violated the student’s First Amendment rights.

In *D.G. v. Independent School District No. 11* (2000) the court took up the controversial zero-tolerance policy that had become so popular in school districts



throughout the country. The court ruled “on the impossibility of having a no–tolerance policy against threats if the threats involve speech” (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014, p. 72).

In *J.S. v. Bethlehem Area School District* (2002), an eighth grade student set up a website labeled, “Teacher Sux,” where offensive descriptive language was used against the school faculty. Within the website the student had a section called, “Why Should [Teacher] Die?” displaying his teacher with head chopped off and soliciting \$20 per viewer to raise money for a hit man to kill the teacher. The principal, after being notified of the website, contacted the FBI and local authorities; as a result, the student was identified and suspended from school. The court ruled, “It is evident that the courts have allowed school officials to discipline students for conduct occurring off school premises where it is established that the conduct materially and substantially interferes with the educational process” (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014, pp. 72-73).

It is imperative that school officials take all kinds of threats seriously and understand the intent of the threat. Gavin de Becker (1997), a threat assessment expert, defined a threat as “a statement meant with intention to cause someone harm, period” (p. 112). Threats of violence should never be taken lightly, no matter what source—verbal, written, social network—reveals the threat.

#### **Fourth Amendment right from unreasonable search and seizure.**

In today’s environment, which is so focused on security and school safety, often the line between law enforcement and education are blurred, conflicting with the need to keep students and faculty safe and protecting students’ constitutional rights. School principals and administrators must also be aware of students’ constitutional rights under

the Fourth Amendment from unreasonable searches and seizure of property without probable cause.

The New Jersey School Search Policy Manual (1998, p. 13) defines a search as, “conduct by a government official that involves an intrusion into a student’s protected privacy interest.” These intrusions included “peeking, poking, or prying into a place or item shielded from public view or closed opaque container . . . a frisk or pat-down would also be a search if conducted by school officials.”

The New Jersey School Search Policy Manual (1998, p. 14) defines a seizure as, “when a government official interferes with an individual’s freedom of movement (the seizure of a person), or when a government official interferes with an individual’s possessory interests in property (the seizure of an object).”

In *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* (1985), the landmark decision on school searches, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school officials act, in loco parentis, (in the place of a parent) and as such are only required to have reasonable suspicion, a standard that is less than probable cause but higher than arbitrarily, to conduct a search and to seize any contraband recovered (Holtz, 2014).

In order for a search to be reasonable under *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* (1985), “the intended search must be justified at its inception,” and “the actual search must be reasonable in its scope, duration, and intensity” (*NJ School Search Policy Manual*, 1998, p. 45).

In *State of Florida v. N.G.B.* (2002), the court warned against law enforcement using school faculty as an agent for law enforcement, to conduct the search of a student, in violation of the Fourth Amendment requirement of having probable cause (Mohandie

& Hoffman, 2014). The School Search Policy Manual has identified this practice as the “silver platter doctrine” (p. 9); where police officers use school officials, who are permitted under *New Jersey v. T. L. O.* (1985) to search a student with reasonable suspicion, to bypass the Fourth Amendment requirement of police officers who are required to have probable cause in order to conduct a search.

In some schools, school principals and school administrators have resorted to the use of metal detectors to protect the students and faculty from the possibility of any person entering the school with a firearm (Smith & Smith, 2006). Metal detectors are a nationally recognized tool to enhance the security system in many airports, courthouses, public buildings, and schools. There are two types of metal detector systems that are commonly used today: the stationary magnetometer, which a person walks through, and it can detect metal objects on the person’s body; and the portable hand held device, commonly referred to as the “wand” (*NJ School Search Policy Manual*, 1998, p. 142).

In the use of the metal detectors, the school official or school security personnel has the authority to detain any person from entering the school that activates the magnetometer (metal detector). If the device is activated by a student or faculty member walking through, the student or faculty member should be asked to walk through the metal detector a second time. If the person activates the metal detector a second time, the school official or school security personnel should use the least intrusive method to conduct a search of the person. The school official or school security personnel should use the “wand” if available, to determine more accurately where the metal object is located within the person’s clothing; the individual should be asked to remove any items that could set off the magnetometer (metal detector). If necessary, a school official can

conduct a search of the student (*New Jersey v. T. L. O.*, 1985), while a police officer would be limited to conducting a “pat down” of the outer clothing. However, “under no circumstances may a school official or police officer rearrange a student’s clothing or order a student to rearrange his or her clothing so as to reveal or expose a view of the student’s undergarments. This constitutes a ‘strip search’ and is flatly prohibited by [New Jersey] statute” (*NJ School Search Policy Manual*, 1998, p. 147). However, Curt Lavarello, the executive director of the School Safety Advocacy Council (as cited in Tonn, 2005, p. 19) advised, “In a case where someone could be armed, the only person that you should send in is an armed person.”

### **Civil Liability**

One of the issues with which school principals and school administrators are constantly confronted is the potential of civil liability. In an environment of school violence, with the potential of school shootings, school principals and school administrators are still concerned with being sued for violations of students’ constitutional rights (42 U.S. Code 1983) federal civil rights law (Holtz, 2014). Some school officials have decided that it is better to do nothing than to make a decision, even in circumstances that require immediate action or law enforcement intervention; even in situations that the courts have decided are permissible under law (*NJ School Search Policy Manual*, 1998).

School officials that act in good faith with the belief that their actions are lawful are protected from legal actions against themselves and their school. In *Harlow v. Fitzgerald* (1982), the United States Supreme Court ruled that government officials cannot be held liable as long as their actions do not violate known laws that a reasonable

person would have known. In *Siegert v. Gilly* (1991), the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that “qualified immunity claims” would be evaluated through a two step process: “(1) was the law governing the public official’s conduct clearly established, and (2) under the law, could a reasonable official have believed the conduct to be lawful” (*NJ School Search Policy Manual*, 1998, p. 5).

It is important that all public employees are aware and respectful of everyone’s constitutional rights. This privilege and benefit extends to students, their parents and faculty. However, the need for a safe teaching and learning environment is paramount in our schools. School officials need to act when the need arises. By understanding and practicing the laws and policies associated with school law, the school officials will protect themselves from any litigation associated with the violation of a student’s, parent’s or faculty constitutional rights (*NJ School Search Policy Manual*, 1998).

In *Ryburn v. Huff* (2012), police officers responded to a high school on a report of threats by a student (Huff) who was believed to have written a letter threatening to shoot up the school. The principal of the school reported to the officers that he was concerned for the safety of the students and requested an investigation be conducted. As a result of the principal’s request, the officers conducted a preliminary investigation that revealed that the student (Huff) had been absent for two days; and through interviews of other students, they believed Huff to be capable of carrying out the threats of shooting up the school (Holtz, 2014).

The officers responded to Huff’s home, where at first there was no answer, but were able to reach his mother by phone inside the house who admitted that her son was inside with her. When she finally opened the door, she spoke to the officers outside her

house and admitted knowing about the rumors of her son having made a threat to shoot the school. When the officers inquired about weapons inside the house, Mrs. Huff ran inside the house with the officers in chase. Once the officers were inside the house and had interviewed the student (Huff), they were satisfied that the rumors were false and informed the school of their findings (Holtz, 2014).

As a result of the officers entering the house without a search warrant or consent, Mr. and Mrs. Huff filed a federal lawsuit (42 US Code 1983) civil action for deprivation of rights. The United States Supreme Court ruled as follows: “The officers were ‘entitled to qualified immunity because Mrs. Huff’s odd behavior, combined with the information the officers gathered at the school, could have led reasonable officers to believe that there could be weapons inside the house and that family members or the officers themselves were in danger’” (Holtz, 2014, p. 178).

Just as previously referred to in *LaVine v. Blaine School District* (2001), the courts on behalf of the Blaine School District, ruled, “Taken together and given the backdrop of actual school shootings, we hold that these circumstances were sufficient to have led school authorities reasonably to forecast substantial disruption of or material interference with school activation—specifically, that James was intending to inflict injury upon himself or others” (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014, p. 72).

### **Model School Security Policies**

In 2007 the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey, Ann Milgram, issued a directive to all County Prosecutors on the model school security policies regarding school lockdown, active shooter response, bomb threats, evacuations and public information. The directive instructs all law enforcement agencies in the State of New Jersey to have

and maintain policies enhancing school security and safety (AG Law Enforcement Directive 2007-1).

**Active shooter.**

The United States Department of Homeland Security (n.d.) defines an active shooter as “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area, typically through the use of firearms. Victims are selected at random; the event is unpredictable and evolves quickly; law enforcement is usually required to end an active shooter situation.” Frazzano and Snyder (2014) argue that the current label of active shooter does not conform to the information learned about active shooters. Perpetrators of mass violence under the definition of active shooters have been known to use different lethal weapons other than a firearm and different tactics to create their act of violence.

The term *active shooter* has evolved from previous different terms that have been associated with a mass murder incident where one or more perpetrators indiscriminately begins the act of violence against individuals in their presence (USDHS, n.d.). Active shooter incidents have also been identified as “rampage shootings” (Newman et al., 2004), while in the past it was more commonly known as “going postal” (Carmona & Butler, 2014).

Due to the different environments associated with an active shooter, Frazzano and Snyder (2014) suggest that the term is no longer useful. They cite the incidents at the Nairobi Westgate Mall by armed terrorists, the Washington Navy yard by a lone shooter, and the Boston Marathon bombing by two brothers with Chechen ties, to suggest that the active shooter term should be revised. The term that has been suggested is “hybrid

targeted violence” (HTV), which would take into account an individual, or individuals causing an act of violence upon a specifically identified group with a combination of lethal weapons.

However, the term *active shooter* gained national acceptance after the Columbine High School shooting on April 20, 1999, (Buerger & Buerger, 2010) when Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris shot and killed 12 classmates and one teacher before committing suicide (Cullen, 2009). As the incident unfolded, police officers responded to the scene, took the basic approach, what Paterson Police Chief William Fraher calls to isolate, evacuate, and negotiate (personal communication, January 7, 2014) or what Frazzano and Snyder (2014) refer to as “stage until safe” (p. 5), which resulted in law enforcement standing by for forty-five minutes while Klebold and Harris continued their rampage shooting, which concluded with their suicide as law enforcement stood by for an additional two hours and 45 minutes before they were able to remove the last survivor from the school. This approach, although consistent with the policy and police procedures of the day, resulted in the death of students and faculty because of the delay in getting the injured medical attention (Cullen, 2009).

### **Lockdown.**

The moment that school officials learn that there is a “criminal element” in the school or on school property, school officials are to immediately order a lockdown of the school (Holtz, 2014, p. 171). School officials must immediately notify law enforcement and report the reason for the lockdown. Law enforcement has a responsibility to take the necessary actions to address and remove the threat and investigate the situation, taking



the necessary action and informing the school officials of their findings (AG Law Enforcement Directive 2007-1).

School lockdowns have been observed in several incidents such as in Jacksonboro, Tennessee, when Assistant Principal Gary Seale, although shot by a 15-year-old student, was able to get to the school intercom and order a school lockdown, saving the lives of countless students and faculty (Tonn, 2005). In Newtown Connecticut, Sandy Hook Elementary School, after being shot in the leg by Adam Lanza, a faculty member [unidentified in the report] managed to get to the intercom and alert the faculty of an active shooter, resulting in a school lockdown. John Hamil, Tulsa, Oklahoma, school district (as cited in Totter, 2005) indicated that lockdowns are also used for instances when a criminal element may be in the area of the school and possibly pose a danger to the students as in pawnshop robbery that had occurred near one of their schools, requiring a school lockdown.

### **Bomb threats.**

Under the New Jersey Attorney General's Directive 2007-1, school principals and school personnel must prepare to deal with bomb threats. All bomb threats are to be taken seriously and not treated as routine. A common weapon used by rampage school shooters are Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), as was used in Oklahoma City (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014), Columbine (Cullen, 2009), and Bath, Michigan (Bernstein, 2012). Of the active shooters studied by Blair, Martaindale, and Nichols (2014) between 2000 and 2010, 3% brought with them IEDs.

When confronted with a bomb threat, school principals and school personnel are to immediately notify law enforcement and report the threat. Along with law

enforcement, school officials must notify the fire department, Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and the County Prosecutor (AG Law Enforcement Directive 2007-1).

Upon the arrival of the first responders, they will follow the protocol of Homeland Security Incident Command System (“Introduction to Incident Command,” 2013), establish a command post, conduct a search of the school, and determine if an unattended or suspicious package is located. If a package is located, a request for the bomb squad should be made (AG Law Enforcement Directive 2007-1).

### **Evacuations.**

The decision to evacuate a school will be determined by the severity of the threat. For example if the situation involves an active shooter, placing the school on lockdown may be the appropriate action of the school principal (AG Law Enforcement Directive 2007-1). Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris were prepared to shoot the students evacuating Columbine High School, when their IEDs exploded, to get a higher death count than Timothy McVeigh. Fortunately, the IEDs did not explode, saving more students from being killed (Cullen, 2009). While Andrew Golden pulled the fire alarm to evacuate the school, he and Mitchell Johnson hid in the woods with rifles, shooting at the students and faculty as they exited the building (Newman et al., 2004).

However, if the situation is an unconfirmed bomb threat, the school principal or administrator has the authority to decide if he or she wants to evacuate the building. Where law enforcement learns of a dangerous condition requiring evacuation or where a suspicious package has been located requiring the need to call for the bomb squad, the

authority to decide will be left to law enforcement (AG Law Enforcement Directive 2007-1).

### **Public information.**

It continues to be the practice of the media to unintentionally glorify these acts of mass violence and in doing so they create false beliefs and assertions about the perpetrator(s) and the circumstances surrounding the mass violence (Booth, Van Hasselt, & Vecchi, 2011).

With the 24/7 news cycles, the media has put into debate whether school violence is on the rise or if the perception of school violence is on the rise due to the greater amount of national and international news coverage. In the past school violence incidents remained a local issue, with the exception of large mass murders; however, today, the media report has expanded to provide information of school violence from across the country (Carmona & Butler, 2014).

In their writings and videotapes (basement tapes) Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris had referenced the 168 people killed in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building by Timothy McVeigh on April 19, 1995. Klebold and Harris boasted about their plan to surpass McVeigh's death count through the explosives devices they had strategically placed around Columbine High School and by shooting the students and faculty as they exited the building (Cullen, 2009).

Meanwhile, McVeigh acted to bomb the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building as a retaliatory strike against the federal government for the failed negotiations by the FBI in Waco, Texas on April 19, 1993 (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014). A group of religious separatists known as the Branch Davidians, named after their religious leader David

Koresch, had barricaded themselves in their compound as the federal government, led by Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) agents, attempted to enforce a search warrant of the compound. The siege lasted for 51 days with the FBI negotiating when the decision was made on April 19, 1993, to raid the compound, resulting in a structural fire set off by the Branch Davidians, killing 76 of their followers (Poland & McCrystle, 1999).

The media attention recounting these acts of mass violence created a problem for school officials with the constant interference of the media by their need to get information. It is crucial to assign one person, a Public Information Officer, to deal with the media. Bill Sadler, a member of the Arkansas State Police, recommends that these types of events with the entire national media and potentially the international media attention, should require members of the media to pool their resources and send one person to represent them (Newman et al., 2004).

Under the New Jersey Attorney General's Directive 2007-1 release of information to the media in an emergency situation resulting in the response of law enforcement, the authority of releasing information to the media is assigned to the Chief of Police or his designee or the department's designated Public Information Officer (AG Law Enforcement Directive 2007-1).

### **School Shootings Controversy**

For the past two decades, the conversation has shifted from inner city school violence to suburban and rural school shootings, bringing with it a new era of legal challenges to suburban and rural school principals and superintendents. School administrators must be cognizant of these changes and how it affects their schools and their ability to continue in their roles as educators (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014).

Although the data indicate that school shootings are more prominent in rural and suburban communities (Newman et al., 2004), urban communities cannot ignore the information learned from each tragic event. In New York City, NBC News (February 28, 2014) reported three Brooklyn schools, James Madison, Edward R. Murrow, and Midwood High Schools, had received threats of a potential school shooting. New York City Police Department, after their investigation, determined the threats were not credible, but as precaution police officers were stationed at each of the high schools. This was a testament of where we are regarding school threats and response. Even though no shooting occurred, the underlying issues associated with school shootings are consistent with the marginalized communities associated with many urban school districts.

However, the subject of school shootings is not without controversy. Burns and Crawford (2003) argue that the response to school shootings has been exaggerated, based on recent research, that juvenile school violence has been decreasing, and juvenile murders in schools is relatively small. They go on to explain that society has reacted to school shootings with moral panic, which is defined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (as cited in Burns & Crawford, 2003) as “moral panic appears when a substantial portion of society feels that particular evildoers pose a threat to the moral order of society” (p. 123).

The reaction to the school shootings has created an environment where schools are now more concerned with the security of the school, requiring school guards, metal detectors, and active shooter drills, than the students. Although these actions of higher security metal detectors and armed personnel had occurred before the rash of school shootings in the 1990's, the security precautions were mainly in the inner-city schools (Burns & Crawford, 2003).

As Table 1 indicates, between the school years of 1992-1993 and 1997-1998, a total of five school years, school shootings averaged 45.2%, while the median value was 40.

Table 1

*School Shootings 1992–1998*

- 
- 
- |   |             |                     |
|---|-------------|---------------------|
| • | 1992 – 1993 | 55 school shootings |
| • | 1993 – 1994 | 51 school shootings |
| • | 1994 – 1995 | 20 school shootings |
| • | 1995 – 1996 | 35 school shootings |
| • | 1996 – 1997 | 25 school shootings |
| • | 1997 – 1998 | 40 school shootings |
- 
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Source: Sanchez (as cited in Burns & Crawford, 2003, p. 126)

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Byrne (as cited in Burns & Crawford, 2003, pp. 126-127) commented, “A child’s chances of being struck by lightning are greater than the million-to-one odds of being killed in school. The number of children killed by gun violence in schools is about half the number of Americans killed annually by lightning.” While Cullen (2009, p. 15) referenced the Center for Disease Control (CDC) which estimated that the likelihood of a child dying in school is about one in a million.

Glassman (as cited in Burns & Crawford, 2003, p. 127) provided the following: “The United States has approximately 30 million children between the ages of 10 and 17 who attend roughly 20,000 secondary schools. In 1994, there were no school shootings in which more than a single person was killed; in 1997, there were four; and in 1998, there were two.”

Alcaraz et al. (2010) of the Southern California Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention found school-related deaths to be rare; a student is fifty

times more likely to be killed outside of his or her school than at any time engaged with his or her school. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that between the years of July 1, 1992, to June 30, 2000, school children “were at least 70 times more likely to be murdered away from school than at school” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

The CDC (as cited in Hankin et al., 2011) reported that approximately 2,500 school children between the ages of 10 and 19 are victims of homicides a year; the School Associated Violent Death (SAVD) study estimated that of the 2,500, about 1% (approximately 25) occur while on school property; and of the 1%, “they involve one victim and one perpetrator, and they are often motivated by a dispute about a romantic relationship, drugs, money, or gangs” (pp.100-101).

Burns and Crawford (2003) suggest that politicians, through their desire to increase juvenile punishment; and the media, through their distortion of reality and focus on violent offenses, are the two groups that have the greatest contribution in creating moral panic concerning school shootings.

It has been the history of the political establishment to address the fears of society (moral panic) through punitive action, which specifically affects the less fortunate through incarceration and extended sentences, and zero tolerance policies (Burns & Crawford, 2003) that affect individuals that have been “excluded, marginalized, and exploited,” in our society (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2010, p. 87).

The Justice Policy Institute has reported that the media focus on school violence has created a perception that schools are a dangerous environment. This perception of magnified school violence has led to new laws regarding schools to include zero

tolerance policies, when everyday gun violence outside schools is a much bigger problem (Burns & Crawford, 2003).

While Devine (as cited in Smith & Smith, 2006) believes that the paramilitary environment created by the fear of violence through the high security presence of surveillance equipment, security personnel, and metal detectors, creates an environment more conducive to violence than prevention, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Alcaraz et al. (2010) agree that the security environments in a school do not create a safer environment but have an opposite effect; the students that feel alienated look at the security measures as a process to get attention through a violent act. Johnson (2009) found that schools that had taken some action to secure their school and environment through the security personnel were able to create the perception of safety, however, these measures were found to create a more violent environment.

The issue of guns in schools continues to be controversial, specifically after the tragedy of Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012. The GFSA requires all schools that receive federal funds to have a state law that prohibits any person to be in a school or on school property with a weapon without having proper legal authorization (Cornell University Law, 2012). State laws that provide for persons to legally carry a concealed weapon do not violate the GFSA; some states have passed legislation that would allow for teachers and/or principals to carry concealed weapons in schools (Shah, 2013).

After the tragedy of the Sandy Hook Elementary School, lawmakers throughout the country vowed to take serious action in addressing the systemic problem of school shootings. As Table 2 indicates, legislators throughout the country have proposed



hundreds of bills associated with school shootings, including arming teachers and school faculty (“School Safety Legislation,” 2013).

Table 2

*School Safety Legislation since Newtown, CT*

<b>Number of Bills</b>	<b>Subject of Legislation</b>
178	School Emergency Planning
101	Police in Schools
84	Arming School Employees (Teachers, Faculty)
81	School Climate and Student Support
76	Building Safety Upgrade
73	Easing School Gun Restrictions
51	Gun Control

Source: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/school-safety-bills-since-newtown.html>

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), a national organization that represents more than one and one-half million pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school teachers and the National Education Association (NEA), a national organization that represents more than three million elementary and secondary school teachers, put out a press release (2012) after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. In their press release the AFT and the NEA, representing over four and one-half million school teachers were clear in their position: “Our duty to every child is to provide safe and secure public schools.” Their press release went on to show how adamant their stand on guns in schools is. “Guns have no place in our schools. Period. We must do everything we can to reduce the possibility of any gunfire in schools and concentrate on ways to keep all guns off school property and ensure the safety of children and school employees” (NEA, 2012).

The AFT President, Randi Weingarten, and AFT Michigan President, David Hecker, have taken a strong stand on firearms in schools. In a letter to Michigan

Governor Rick Snyder (December 16, 2012), two days after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, they asked the governor to veto a Michigan bill that would permit concealed firearms in schools. In their letter they wrote, “Firearms have absolutely no place in our schools” (AFT, 2012).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have released a statement, “increasing the number of guns in schools would not reduce the likelihood of tragedies like [Sandy Hook Elementary School]. A principal’s first responsibility is to foster a safe, orderly, warm and inviting environment.” These statements suggest armed teachers and principals “might do more harm than good” (Zubrzycki, 2012).

However, after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, some are calling for teachers and faculty to be armed (Wilson, 2013). In fact, in response to the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Wayne LaPierre, the Vice President and spokesman for the National Rifle Association (NRA), suggested that the answer to safeguard school children is through the use of armed security guards in every school. In his statement that was broadcast by every major media outlet in the United States, Wayne LaPierre said, “The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun (Pilkington, 2012).

As reported, personnel who are allowed to carry guns also carry extreme responsibility; NBC News reported (January 18, 2013), in their story of a security guard in Michigan who had left his gun in the bathroom and one of the students found the firearm and fortunately turned it in (NBC News, 2013), while in October 2002 an armed security guard at Tulsa High School was involved in a shooting with an expelled student

who he believed to be armed, when the bullet from the security guard's gun struck and injured another student (Trotter, 2005).

In the state of Utah school officials have been allowed to carry concealed firearms for over ten years, while in the state of Texas there are four school districts that have certain school employees that have been given the authority, anonymously, to carry concealed firearms in the school. Johnny Price of Big Iron Concealed Handgun Training in Waco, Texas, trains schoolteachers on the proper procedures of carrying a concealed handgun. In his training of schoolteachers at the shooting range, he points out the obvious—that every bullet that misses its target is a bullet that could potentially hit an innocent child (Shah, 2013).

In the state of Georgia, the governor signed into law the “Safe Carry Protection Act” that would allow gun owners, as of July 1, 2014, to carry firearms in bars, schools, churches, and some government buildings that do not have security measures in place banning firearms (Copeland & Richards, 2014).

However, a school staff member carrying a concealed weapon brings with it the perception that the school is not safe, even if the facts state otherwise. “Is the school really safe, a parent might wonder, if the principal feels that he or she needs to carry a firearm? Any impression that obstructs a trusting relationship in school, compromises school safety, instead of enhancing it” (Zubrzycki, 2012).

The Associated Press (as cited in *Education Week*, 2014) has done an analysis of school shootings since the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14, 2012, and the Associated Press has found that “school shootings continue despite the safety emphasis.” Even with the school safety plans, the metal detectors, the surveillance

cameras, and identification badges, the number of school shootings has not decreased (“School Shootings Continue,” 2014).

The U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Johns Hopkins University convened a national summit of law enforcement and academic experts, to review “strategic approaches to preventing multiple casualty violence” (USDOJ, 2013, p. 1). The summit took place in Glynnco, Georgia, on December 11 and ended on December 13, one day before the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. At the conclusion of the national summit, it was learned that there were not enough data on the subject of active shooters.

Moms Demand Action and Mayors Against Illegal Guns conducted a study between December 15, 2012, and February 10, 2014, on school shootings during this fourteen-month period, which consisted of 44 school shootings. Moms Demand Action and Mayors Against Illegal Guns reviewed school shootings one day after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting (Analysis, 2014).

As reflected in Table 3, school shootings continue at an alarming rate, and not all shootings are a result of an active shooter, but just as deadly (Analysis, 2014).

Table 3

*44 School Shootings in 14 Months* (December 15, 2012-February 10, 2014)

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<b>Shootings by type of school</b>	
28	K – 12 Schools
16	Colleges or University
<b>Shootings by injury and intent</b>	
29	Non – Fatal or Fatal Assaults
4	Non – Fatal or Fatal Assaults / Attempted or Completed Suicides
7	Suicides
4	No injuries of Any Kind
<b>Shootings at K – 12 Schools by School – Type</b>	
17	High Schools
5	Middle Schools
6	Elementary
<b>Shootings at K – 12 Schools by Age of Shooter</b>	
1	5 – years – old
2	12 – years – old
1	13 – years – old
1	15 – years – old
3	16 – years – old
6	17 – years – old
6	18+ - years – old

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Source: Moms Demand Action & Mayors Against Illegal Guns, 2014.

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Michael Dorn, a school safety expert with Safe Havens International, expressed his concern regarding the current atmosphere in regard to school shootings. Mr. Dorn’s concern focuses on school officials’ attitude towards addressing the shooter in contrast to protecting the school children; “[school staff members are] forgetting to protect children while they’re doing this. They are failing to clear the room in the process of going after intruders.” While Ken Trump, President of the National School Safety and Security Services, has expressed that he disagrees with the arming of school officials and that the

focus on active shooters, a reactive approach to a school shooting incident, has taken away the proactive practices of securing schools and conducting drills (Shah, 2013, p. 3). Kevin Quinn of the National Association of School Resource Officers expressed his concerns regarding school officials carrying firearms at the time of an active shooter incident. Kevin Quinn expressed the possibility that police officers may be confronted with an armed school official that may be mistaken for the assailant at the time of the incident or be detained by trying to identify a person with a gun as being friend or foe (Ujifusa, 2012; Wilson, 2013).

Violent video games have been a controversial issue surrounding school shootings. Newman et al. (2004) asked the question, “Are violent video games, lyrics, and movies to blame for the recent spate of rampage school shootings?” (p. 252). Through their study, Newman et al. (2004) identified sixteen-year-old Michael Carneal (West Paducah, Kentucky), fourteen-year-old Mitchell Johnson and eleven-year-old Andrew Golden (Jonesboro, Arkansas), the three school shooters they studied, as having a strong attraction to violent video games and violent movies.

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman and Loren Christensen (2012) found violent video games can create a “conditioned reflex–stimulus–response” that desensitizes children exposed to the violent games regarding killing (p. 81). Through violent video games today’s children are creating a virtual reality where people are killed for points, developing skills previously only available to the military and law enforcement.

Dr. Marshal Soules, at Malaspina University in Canada (as cited in Grossman & Christensen, 2012) found that for some children video games have become more real than reality in what he refers to as “hyper reality effect.” He compares the playing of these

violent video games as equivalent to a child making a puppy cry, or “pathological play” (p. 82).

Wood and Huffman (as cited in Smith & Smith, 2006) view the future of school safety through a proactive rather than reactive strategy, through education and staff development, “in recognizing and diffusing potentially violent situations, and developing appropriate relationships with students” (p. 41).

### **School Shootings**

With all the information surrounding school shootings, it is important to differentiate between an active shooter, mass casualty, and school violence. All active shooter and mass casualty situations in a school setting constitute school violence; however, not all school violence falls into the category of active shooter or mass casualty incidents.

In the NYPD Active Shooter Report (2010, 2012), the New York City police department reviewed 324 active shooter incidents that included office buildings, open commercial establishments, factories, warehouses, schools, and other locations. Of the 324 active shooting incidents, 93 involved active shooters in schools, of which 58 involved school students, 15 were former school students, eight were school employees, two involved domestic violence, and 11 active shooter incidents were caused by an outsider, not associated with the school or students.

Of the 93 school shootings in the NYPD (2010, 2012) active shooter report, 35 committed suicide, 44 ended with the use of force, while three of the shooters had killed a parent before moving forward to commit the act of an active shooter at a school.

In the Moms Demand Action and Mayors against Illegal Guns metadata study on school shootings (Pilkington, 2014), between December 15, 2012, and February 10, 2014, a 14-month period, which consisted of 44 school shootings, 13 were active shooter shootings resulting in seven suicides, while 14 were shootings based on school violence unrelated to an active shooter incident as defined.

With so much attention to active shooter incidents, education and training have been focused on preparing school officials, faculty, and students for the next act of mass casualty in a school. However, as previously addressed, school security experts caution school officials and law enforcement from a concentration on active shooters as opposed to a comprehensive program to deal with school violence that encompasses active shooters and other incidents that may lead to suicide and/or school shootings (Ujifusa, 2012).

In addressing school shootings through the broader lens of school violence, there is the ability to foresee other areas that may not be included in the current literature. Mohandie and Meloy (2014) have identified some instances of mass casualty in schools that may not have been identified in the past, such as the Oklahoma City Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing on April 19, 1995. Of the 168 people killed, 19 of them were six-year-old children that were in the building's day care center.

Timothy McVeigh had parked a rental truck with explosives in the front of the Federal Building, aware that there was a day care center inside the building. The Oklahoma bombing became the country's worst act of domestic terrorism, an act of school violence, killing 19 six-year-olds from a day care center by a person not affiliated with the school. Timothy McVeigh, during an interview conducted by the FBI, referred to



the death of the 19 children as casualties. He said, “Women and kids were killed at Waco and Ruby Ridge. You put back in [the government’s] faces exactly what they’re giving out” (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014, p.150).

They further recognized the Beslan School siege on September 1, 2004, as an act of terrorism, where Chechen Islamic separatist had taken over the school on the first day of school. It was a school massacre as well as a terrorist act. During the siege Chechen rebels took 1,100 hostages, most of them children, and the result was that 334 of the hostages were killed, 186 of them children, making this incident the greatest act of school violence recorded (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014, p.150).

More recently, *The Washington Post* (May 6, 2014) reported a group of Islamist extremists in Nigeria known as Boko Haram, had kidnapped 276 schoolgirls between the ages of 12 and 15 from the Chibok Government Girls Secondary School and dragged them away in trucks.

However, mass casualties of school children is not a new event. Bernstein (2009) described the bombing of the Bath, Michigan, Elementary School on May 18, 1927, by 55-year-old Andrew Kehoe, the school board treasurer, upset with the fact that he had to pay additional taxes for the elementary school. Andrew Kehoe took about a year to plant bombs all around the school with the intent of blowing it up with everyone in it. Through his position as treasurer of the school board, it was not unusual for Kehoe to be in the school, deceiving everyone as he prepared to blow up the school.

Prior to setting off the bomb at the Bath Elementary School that killed 38 school children and six adults, Kehoe bombed his home and barn, killing his wife. He had also

planted dynamite in his car and detonated the dynamite after the school bombing, killing himself (Bernstein, 2009; Dotinga, 2012; Mohandie and Meloy, 2014).

Just as with Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris in Columbine (Cullen, 2009) or Seung-Hui Cho in Virginia Tech (Hong, Cho & Lee, 2010), these acts of mass murder are always planned far in advance. It is a false supposition to believe these perpetrators of mass violence just snapped. Mohandie (2014) identified leakage as “the communication to a third party of intent to do harm to a target,” as one of the most common warning behavior of an active shooter (p. 131).

On April 9, 2014, Alex Hribal, a sophomore student of Franklin Regional High School, located near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, entered his school slashing and stabbing 21 students and a security officer with two knives before being tackled by an assistant principal. Hribal has been charged as an adult for four counts of attempted murder and 21 counts of aggravated assault in this act of active shooter with two knives with eight-inch blades, instead of firearms. It was reported that Hribal had made plans to kill the students at the school and when grabbed by the assistant principal, had said he had more people to kill (“Search for Motive,” 2014; Walsh, 2014).

Newman et al. (2004) chronicled the process taken by Michael Carneal, age 14, in preparing to commit his act of mass murder at West Paducah, Kentucky, on December 1, 1997; or Andrew Golden, age 11 and Mitchell Johnson, age 13, preparing their act of mass murder at Jonesboro, Arkansas, on March 24, 1998, to include how Andrew Golden pulled the fire alarm to evacuate the school so that he and Mitchell Johnson could kill the students and faculty as they exited the building, a scheme planned nine weeks before the incident.

### **Inside threats.**

As the review of the literature regarding school shootings clearly indicates, school principals have to be concerned with threats to students, parents, teachers, faculty and the institution itself. Through their research, Newman et al. (2004) found that although the rampage shooter may have specific targets, it is the institution they attack. School shooters identify two types of groups that they perceive as the cause of their marginalization in their school environment. The first group is the adult authority figures, who have disciplined them or failed to protect them. The second group is the students that they perceive as having wronged them. However, both groups are part and reflective of the institutional environment that school shooters perceive has wronged them to the point of their having to act out (Newman et al., 2004).

The NYPD metadata study on active shooters (2010, 2012) reviewed 93 school shooting incidents and found that of the 93 school shootings, 58 were students of the school and eight were school employees. Some examples of active shooters by inside threats are represented here:

On November 8, 2005, Kenneth Bartley, Jr., a student at Campbell County Comprehensive High School, Jacksboro, Tennessee, was called into the principal's office on suspicion he had a firearm, when he killed an assistant principal and wounded two others (Jacobs & Alapo, 2005).

On September 29, 2006, Eric Hainstock, age 15, a student at Weston Schools, Cazenovia, Wisconsin, killed his principal. Hainstock claimed he had reported being bullied by other students to school officials, but nothing had been done (Lueders, 2008).

On April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, age 23, a student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blackburg ,Virginia, killed 32 people and wounded 20 before committing suicide (Hong & Lee, 2010).

On January 5, 2011, Robert Butler, Jr., age 17, killed the assistant principal at Millard South High School after he was suspended for trespassing. The perpetrator had stolen a firearm from his father and had made a public statement on Facebook (Caulfield, 2011).

### **Outside threats.**

School principals and school officials must also be concerned with outside threats from former students, parents, and disgruntled employees (Mohandie, 2014). The NYPD metadata study on active shooters (2010, 2012) reviewed 93 school shooting incidents and found that of the 93 school shootings, 15 were former students, 11 had no ties to the schools, and two were former employees. Some examples of active shooters by outside threats are represented here:

On January 29, 1979, at Cleveland Elementary School, San Diego, California, a 16-year-old girl, Brenda Spencer, who lived across the street from the elementary school opened fire, wounding eight school children and a police officer and killing the school principal and a school custodian. Brenda Spencer credits the reason for the rampage shooting as, “I don’t like Mondays,” which was turned into a popular song by the Boomtown Rats (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014, p. 149).

On January 18, 1989, at Cleveland Elementary School, Stockton, California, a 25-year-old, Edward Purdy, parked his car and set it on fire with a Molotov cocktail before he opened fire on 34 school children, killing five, before he turned the gun on himself and

committed suicide. Like Adam Lanza, the perpetrator of the school massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Purdy had been a student of Cleveland Elementary School from kindergarten to third grade (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014).

On March 21, 2005, at Red Lake High School, Minnesota, a 16-year-old former student, Jeff Weise, after having killed his grandfather, Daryl Lussier, a tribal police officer, and his grandfather's girlfriend at their home, Weise took his grandfather's gun, duty belt, body armor, and police car, and proceeded to Red Lake High School, where he killed five students, a teacher, and an unarmed security guard who was at the school entrance by the metal detector. Weise then exchanged gunfire with the police before committing suicide (Wilgoren, 2005).

On October 2, 2006, Charles Carl Roberts IV, age 32, killed five students in an Amish schoolhouse in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, before he committed suicide ("5<sup>th</sup> Girl Dies," 2006).

On December 14, 2010, Clay A. Duke, age 56, held the Bay District School Board of Education meeting in Panama City, Florida at gunpoint because he blamed their action for his wife's losing her job. Clay had a starter pistol with blanks and was killed by an armed school officer, an act of "suicide by cop" ("Florida School Board Shooting," 2010).

On April 20, 2013, the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting (April 20, 1999), a 20-year-old, Michael Brandon Hill, with an AK47 fired six shots inside the lobby at the Ronald E. McNair Learning Elementary School, where he then barricaded himself inside the offices. Negotiations with Michael Brandon Hill were conducted by Antoinette Tuff, the employee who called 911 and was able to talk to Hill

and talk him into giving himself up, resulting in no one being injured (King & Welch, 2013), an example of a faculty member having to act on her experience and strength to resolve a volatile situation.

On January 14, 2014, a 12-year-old student with a shotgun shot and wounded an 11-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl before being talked down by a faculty member who got him to drop the shotgun (Stanglin, 2014), another example of a faculty member having to act on his or her experience and strength to resolve a volatile situation.

Both of these previous example are reminders of the threat and danger to faculty and administrators as represented here and in the outcome of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, where school principal Dawn Hochsprung and school psychologist Mary Sherlach confronted Adam Lanza as he entered the school shooting his automatic rifle, resulting in their deaths while trying to protect their school and students (Sedensky, 2013).

### **Workplace violence.**

The NYPD metadata study on active shooters (2010, 2012) reviewed 93 school shooting incidents and found that of the 93 school shootings, eight were school employees and two were former employees. Some examples of workplace violence active shooters are represented here:

On July 17, 2003, Richard Dean Bright, age 58, a maintenance worker at Kanawha County School District, showed up to a school board meeting, where he poured gas over his supervisor to set him on fire; but when his lighter malfunctioned, he started shooting, injuring a teacher (Messina, 2003).

On February 12, 2010, Amy Bishop, age 42, a professor at the University of Alabama, Huntsville, Alabama, killed three people and wounded three others in a faculty meeting because she was denied tenure (“Ex-Professor Pleads Guilty,” 2012).

On February 26, 2010, Jed Waits, age 30, went to Birney Elementary school in Tacoma, Washington, where he killed a teacher he was stalking (Bartley & Clarridge, 2010).

On March 9, 2012, Nathaniel Brown, age 51, a custodian at Ohio State University, shot and killed a co-worker and injured another after he was informed he was fired (Gray, 2010).

On June 20, 2013 two custodians, Ted Orama, age 56, and Christopher Marshall, age 48, were shot and killed at Alexander W. Dreyfus School in West Palm Beach, Florida. The suspect, Javier Burgos, age 53, was identified as a fellow custodian (Shammas, 2013).

### **School Preparedness**

The National School Safety Center (as cited in Booth, Van Hasselt, & Vecchi, 2011) found that schools need to develop a close relationship with their law enforcement agency, where they can work together on the multiple and complex issues of school violence. In 1988 the state of New Jersey created the Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials, which has gone through several revisions in 1992, 1999, and 2007 to its most recent form in 2011, to provide a statewide policy that will ensure cooperation between law enforcement and schools to protect the educational environment.

The agreement requires a school liaison to be assigned from the law enforcement agency to work together with the schools to ensure the proper implementation and adherence to the memorandum of agreement between education and law enforcement officials (Holtz, 2014).

In Article 8 of the New Jersey Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials (2011), the state of New Jersey acknowledges that, “recent tragic events in the nation’s schools highlight the need for developing and maintaining up-to-date school-based safety and security plans” (p. 132). The school safety plan, which must include law enforcement in its development, should include a provision for a Threat Assessment Team (TAT), to be used to evaluate any and all reports of a threat by a student, parent, or faculty member (Memorandum of Agreement, 2011).

Booth et al. (2011) recommends the school safety plan must have provisions which include the policy by the school administration for discipline to include the process of detention, suspension, and expulsion of a student if it is found that such action is necessary, and the statutory requirements to involve law enforcement if necessary.

The issue of having armed guards continues to be a subject confronted by school principals and school administrators (Trotter, 2005). Just as Michael Dorn of Safe Haven International has concerns about school officials’ focus on active shooters over other safety and security issues (Shah, 2013), Ronald Stephens, the executive director of the National School Safety Center has concerns about the overemphasis on armed guards in schools (Trotter, 2005).

The school shooting in Jacksboro, Tennessee, in 2005, which left Assistant Principal Ken Bruce dead and Assistant Principal Gary Seale wounded by a 15-year-old



disruptive student is one that has brought to light the dangers that could come upon school faculty. Assistant Principal Seale was able to get to the school intercom to order a lockdown and protect the school students and faculty from an active shooter incident (Tonn, 2005), just as in the shooting in Sandy Hook Elementary School, where school principal Dawn Hochsprung and school psychologist Mary Sherlach confronted Adam Lanza as he was shooting, and a lockdown was made possible by a faculty member [unidentified in the report] shot in the leg (Sedensky, 2013).

In Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, Pennsylvania, an assistant principal tackled and subdued a 16-year-old sophomore student, Alex Hribal, who had come to the school and begun to slash and stab 20 students and a security guard (“Search for Motive,” 2014; Walsh, 2014).

About half of all new teachers leave teaching within the first five years due to low pay, lack of student discipline, and safety concerns (Liu, 2007).

Schweit reports in her article for the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (2013) that the average active shooter incident lasts 12 minutes, and 57% of the time the police officer arriving at the scene will be in a position to confront the perpetrator; one-third of those officers will be shot. Blair et al. (2014) found that of the active shooter incidents they studied between the years of 2000 and 2012, the median police response was three minutes.

However, prior to police arrival school officials are the first responders and need to be prepared to deal with the circumstances at hand (Tonn, 2005). Throughout the United States there are 114,000 schools with 50 million students and 6 million schoolteachers; all will have some involvement in school violence (Hankin et al., 2011).

It is not only students and faculty with whose safety the school principal must be concerned; on any given school day one out of five American citizens will be in a school (Hankin et al., 2011).

It is imperative that school principals are cognitive of the dangers in which they and their faculty may also be involved when dealing with school violence. The National Center of Education Statistics (as cited in Hankin et al., 2011) reported that in the 2003/2004 school year, 9% of teachers said a student had threatened them, while 4% said a student had assaulted them. Ronald Stephens, the executive director of the National School Safety Center said, “If we want to make our campuses safe for our children, we first have to make them safe for the adults who supervise them” (Tonn, 2005, p.19). Teachers have indicated, “Student disruption, tardiness, lack of attention, disrespect, bullying and violence can ruin a healthy learning environment that teachers depend on to effectively do their job” (Liu, 2007, p. 2).

Schools need to focus on preventive measures of school safety that address the issues of bullying, harassment, and assaults that are indicators of troubled students and can be addressed to prevent a school shooting (Trotter, 2005). Wilson (2013) in his article “What’s Working” for *Curriculum Review* suggests that “creating a safe and positive school environment can help deter negative behavior and its intended consequences” (p. 6). School principals should encourage all faculty, administrators, teachers, nurses, bus drivers, and security personnel, to develop a relationship of safety and respect with the students, to gain their confidence and trust so that the students may confide in them at times of need (Wilson, 2013).

In their review of school shootings, the Secret Service identified bullying as one of the factors that create isolation and fear among certain students, which, if not properly addressed by school officials, may lead to behavioral problems for the student and school violence (Wilson, 2013, p. 2).

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that death by injuries remains the number 1 leading cause of death for children between the ages of five and 18 (NHIS, 2013), while homicide is the second leading cause of death; and of these deaths less than 2% occur on school property (CDC, 2014). The CDC 2012 fact sheet on school violence reported that 20% of school children reported being bullied at school; 16% reported cyber bullying; 12% reported having had physical fights during the school year; 7.4% reported being threatened or injured with a weapon at school; 5.9% reported missing school because they felt unsafe in the school; and 5.4% reported having carried a weapon onto school property (CDC, 2012). The CDC reports suicide as the third leading cause of death for school-age children; of these children 16% seriously considered suicide, 13% created a plan to commit suicide, and 8% attempted to commit suicide, while 4,600 a year succeed in committing suicide (CDC, 2014).

Newman et al. (2004) found that school shooters tend to be suicidal and turn their suicidal motivations homicidal, outward towards the group, specifically institutions that they perceive have made them an outcast. The NYPD metadata study on active shooters (2010, 2012) reviewed 93 school shooting incidents and found that of the 93 school shootings, 44 were stopped by lethal force, 35 committed suicide, and one attempted suicide.

Shneidman (as cited in Mohandie & Meloy, 2014, p. 128) identified 10 common patterns of school violence offenders and students that contemplate suicide:

1. Solution-seeking
2. Cessation of consciousness
3. Unbearable psychological pain
4. Frustrated psychological needs
5. Common emotion of hopelessness/helplessness
6. Cognitive state of ambivalence
7. Perceptual state of constriction
8. Common action is escape
9. Common interpersonal act is communication of intent
10. Consistency of life-long styles

Meloy et al. (as cited in Mohandie & Meloy, 2014) indicated that the natural course of many mass murderers is to commit suicide, and as such the relation between mass murder and suicide is not unexpected.

#### **School resource officers.**

As previously identified, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals are opposed to school personnel carrying firearms in schools; however, they support funding for school resource officers (Zubrzycki, 2012). School resource officers are trained police officers that are required to follow policies established by their law enforcement agency and trained to carry firearms, but they are only one part of the security plan of any school (Totter, 2005).

Even in the massacre at Columbine High School, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department had an SRO, Deputy Neil Gardner, assigned full time to Columbine High School, where the shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were aware of his presence; but that did not prevent them from their planning and following through their act of violence (Cullen, 2009; Totter, 2005).

Booth, Van Hasselt, and Vecchi (2011) in their article in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, identified the SRO program as an intricate part of school safety, with the ability to have a police officer in the school at the time of an incident. They further found that the SRO program is effective in creating a positive relationship between law enforcement and school officials, as well as law enforcement and students.

Booth et al. (2011) identified three areas where law enforcement officers can be influential in reducing violence in the schools: having an open line of communication with teachers and administrators having the ability to make their own judgment regarding the students' behavior, and developing relationships with the staff and students so that the staff and students have another resource where they can go to report issues and concerns. Through the SRO and Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) programs, law enforcement has been able to make a great deal of improvement in their relationships with school officials and students (Booth et al., 2011).

### **Incident command system.**

As a result of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, in New York City, the Pentagon, and Pennsylvania, the 9/11 Commission was established by President George W. Bush and the United States Congress to investigate the attack and the response (9/11 Report, 2004). One of the recommendations the 9/11

Commission made as a result of their investigation was to follow the Incident Command System. The 9/11 Commission wrote, “Emergency response agencies nationwide should adopt the Incident Command System (ICS). When multiple agencies or multiple jurisdictions are involved, they should adopt a unified command. Both are proven frameworks for emergency response” (9/11 Report, 2004, p. 397).

The purpose for the ICS is to prepare first responders to work within a unified emergency response system during a crisis situation (“Introduction to Incident,” 2013). The 9/11 Commission (2004) found that first responders had an inability to communicate with responders of other agencies or jurisdictions; this was found to be true at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and at Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

As a result of all that was learned after 9/11, ICS focuses on ensuring first responders, law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, and other crucially important agencies have common policies and procedures to the response of a disaster. ICS further establishes procedures for different agencies and jurisdictions to be able to plan and manage their resources more effectively and allows for integration of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communication (“Introduction to Incident,” 2013), which was one of the key factors identified in the 9/11 Commission report, which required extensive review and reform (9/11 Report, 2004).

### **Threat assessment.**

Matthew J. Mayer of Rutgers University (as cited in Viadero, 2010) argues when addressing school violence that it is not a single problem with a single solution; the process of having zero-tolerance policies and suspensions have to be re-examined, and other avenues of preventing school violence explored. School suspensions lead to failing

grades, creating an environment pervasive to student disengagement (Viadero, 2010); heavy handed discipline leads to student resentment and greater discipline problems (Liu, 2007).

School principals and administrators should look at the research regarding school violence; Hankin et al. (2011) specifically identify children that are exposed to violence as a clear and significant predictor of future aggression.

Booth, Van Hasselt, and Vecchi (2011) in their article in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, addressed the issue of school violence through the identification of warning signs available to school officials to identify violent students that can become shooters if not identified and prevent their violent act.

Booth, Van Hasselt, and Vecchi describe four main areas of examination:

1. Family Dynamics: Family's thinking, traditions, beliefs, and patterns of behavior.
2. School Dynamics: School's customs, beliefs, and behavioral patterns (e.g., bullying treatment of students, some individuals receiving more/less attention, school activities).
3. Social Dynamics: Students' beliefs and attitudes toward drugs, friends, weapons, entertainment, and other activities (e.g., violent video games).
4. Characteristics/Personality: Leakage, depression, verbal expressions, bizarre actions, thoughts/obsessions, and physical behaviors.

Teachers who have the closest relations with their students are at a vantage point to recognize behavioral problems and should be encouraged to bring their concerns to the administration (Newman et al., 2004). Wilson (2013) suggests that schools encourage the

building of relationships between students and faculty from the principal to the bus driver. The relationships that are fostered between students and faculty can result in providing appropriate adult role models to students who may not have appropriate role models at home, and provide for an adult in which to confide during times of serious threats to the student or the school (Wilson, 2013).

Alcaraz et al. (2010) suggests schools that encourage and “set high standards for interpersonal behavior” create a positive environment between the students and faculty, which in turn creates an environment of less violence. School faculty that know their students’ names, greets their students in the hallway and throughout the school grounds, show that they are invested in their students, create a bond of trust that has proven to reduce problems in school (Wilson, 2013).

Threat assessment teams should be created, and routinely meet, to discuss and make recommendations regarding student behavior (Newman et al., 2004) just as a teacher meets with school principals regarding student academic problems.

Newman et al., (2004) suggests that the hiring of young teachers that are current with the young culture is a way to allow for students to open up and discuss problems with someone whom they may feel would have a better understanding of them, as well providing positive role models. Faculty that engage students to discourage teasing and bullying throughout the school create a culture conducive to a safe educational environment (Wilson, 2013).

Johnson (2009) suggests “school principals and school superintendents rethink what ‘security’ means in schools” (p. 464). By improving the school environment and placing a stronger emphasis on student-faculty relationships and positive classroom



interactions, the student, the faculty, and the school will get better results in preventing violence. Not unlike Kelling and Wilson's (1982) "broken window theory," Johnson found "evidence to support the benefit of creating orderly, safe physical environments for learning over other school security interventions" that are being recommended throughout school districts (Johnson, 2009, p. 464). Children that are exposed to violence, even at a low level, have a higher probability of expressing themselves through violence, are known to do poorly in school, and have difficulty trusting others (Hankin et al., 2011).

The U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education study (as cited in Wilson, 2013) identified that most school shooters had confided in another student of their plans to commit the violent act. Without the confidence of adult role models, students will continue to remain silent about information they have regarding potential school violence, including school shootings (Wilson, 2013).

Bloom (2008) in her article "Why Shy Pupils Become School Killers" reviewed personality traits taken from FBI reports, which identified three specific traits in rampage school shootings that are associated with what has been referred to as "clinically shy." The first trait was isolation and total withdrawal; the second trait was a history of being bullied or of bullying others; and the third trait was a very low tolerance of frustration.

While the United States Secret Service final report and findings of the school safety initiative, *Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States* (2002), provided 10 key findings to school shootings, Key-finding 4, was clear in indicating that "there is no accurate or useful profile of students who engage in targeted school violence" (p. 33).

Blair, Martaindale, and Nichols (2014) conducted a metadata analysis of active shooter events between 2000 and 2010. Their findings were reported in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* on January 7, 2014, which revealed that during this period of 2000-2012, active shooter incidents have been on a steady rise; these events “went from approximately one every other month between 2000 and 2008 (five per year) to more than one per month between 2009 and 2012 (almost 16 per year)” (p. 4). Their study further identified that 29% of the active shooter incidents occurred in schools, and in 45% of the attacks the perpetrator did not have any connection with the victim (Blair et al., 2014).

Through the review of the literature there are identifiable factors that continue to be highlighted regarding school shooters. In her study on rampage school shootings, Newman et al. (2004) identified five areas (factors) associated with rampage school shootings:

Factor 1: Marginality – Contrary to popular belief, school shooters are not loners; the CDC and Secret Service (as cited in Newman et al., 2004) found that only one in ten of the shooters was found to have no friends. Newman et al. (2004) reported that four out of five shooters showed signs of being marginalized, having few friends, and had difficulty in gaining acceptance in a social group; the shooters that did gain acceptance got involved with groups that were marginalized within the social hierarchy of the school.

Bloom (2008) identified school shooters as isolated and totally withdrawn when rejected by a group, manifesting anger, dehumanizing others, and developing a lack of empathy. The clinically shy student that develops these traits has a strong hatred of others

and develops feelings of superiority that allow the student to act out his or her plans of committing a rampage school shooting.

One of the key factors identified by the United States Secret Service Report (2002) and Newman et al., (2004) was the fact that many of the attackers had felt they had been bullied and/or abused. Booth et al. (2011) described bullying as part of the school dynamics in addressing school violence. Bloom (2008) identified school shooters as having been victims of bullying but also as taking their revenge out by bullying others.

Factor 2: Individual Vulnerabilities – Newman et al. (2004) found the individual shooters as having multiple problems, including psychological conditions that add to the marginalization, and family problems. The United States Secret Service Report (2002) indicated that of the shooters they had studied, one-third had been evaluated for a mental health disorder and less than one-fifth had been diagnosed with a mental health or behavioral disorder. However, four out of five of the school shooters had attempted suicide or considered suicide (Newman et al., 2004). The United States Secret Service Report's (2002) Key-finding 6 identified attackers as having difficulty "coping with significant losses or personal failures. Many had considered or attempted suicide" (p. 35).

Newman et al. (2004) found two-thirds of the individual shooters coming from two-parent homes, which is contrary to most criminologists' expectation of criminal behavior. However, 85% of the shooters studied by Newman et al. (2004) were found "to come from dysfunctional homes, were suicidal, depressed, or suffered from a major mental illness" (p. 245).

Factor 3: Cultural Scripts – Newman et al. (2004) found school shooters to be following a pattern of behavior that was consistent with popular culture: "the masculine

exit” (p. 247), “sending a message” (p. 249), “fame” (p. 250), “threats and escalating commitments” (p. 251), and “designing a rampage” (p. 252). School shooters are “troubled, angry, and desperate” targeting the schools that have done them wrong. Some shooters indicated they had no options when ignored or mistreated by their peers. They attempt to change their social status; and when that does not work, they revert to the cultural script “visible in popular culture” (p. 246). School shooters that have survived their act of rampage shooting have claimed they had notified adults of the bullying and abuse and that at times adults had witnessed the bullying and abuse and did not address it (Newman et al., 2004).

Newman et al. (2004) found school shooters reported having felt trapped, needing what they described as a “manly exit” (p. 248), a way to show their masculinity as portrayed in the popular culture. The study learned that many perpetrators of rampage shootings had considered committing suicide or attempted to commit suicide before they acted on their school shooting. Rampage shooters know they are not going to get away with the shootings and plan to commit suicide by their own hands or by that of the authority, “suicide by cop.” Part of the cultural script of a rampage school shooter is to send a message; “send a final, powerful message, not only to their tormentors but to everyone who hurt or excluded them” (Newman et al., 2004, p. 249).

School shooters use this act of violence to target the hierarchy of the school that they perceive is the cause for their marginalization, and as a result gain fame (Newman et al., 2004). Timothy McVeigh, on April 19, 1995, bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 68 people, 19 of them six-year-olds from the day care center. McVeigh credited the bombing as retaliation for the federal assault on the Waco compound on

April 19, 1993, two years to the earlier date (Mohandie and Meloy, 2014). Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold credited, in their notebooks and basement tapes, Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing as the catalyst, not against the federal government, but for fame, adding in their notebooks and basement tapes that they wanted to have a higher body count than McVeigh (Cullen, 2009).

Newman et al. (2004) identified “Threats and Escalating Commitments” (p. 251) as the process of the perpetrators advertising their intent beforehand and having to escalate their actions to prove their commitment. Meloy and O’Toole (as cited in Mohandie, 2014) refer to this information released by the perpetrator of his premeditated action as “leakage warning behavior” (p. 129). The United States Secret Service Report’s (2002) Key-finding 2 found that in most incidents there were other people that had knowledge of the perpetrator’s plans to commit an act of violence beforehand; the information of the premeditated act was known by other students, friends, or siblings, who did not report it to any adult or person of authority. Newman et al. (2004) highlight that after the potential shooter has boasted about the act of violence that they intend to commit in order to attract attention and change their social status within the school hierarchy, it causes them to be boxed in and be further ridiculed if they don’t follow through. The United States Secret Service (as cited in Newman et al., (2004) confirms the importance of the commitment of the shooters. “Nearly half of the attackers were influenced by other individuals in deciding to mount an attack, dared or encouraged by others to attack, or both” (p. 252).

The United States Secret Service Report’s (2002) Key-factor 1 identified that incidents of targeted violence at schools are rarely sudden or impulsive; instead they are

planned, often for many weeks and months. Newman et al. (2004) identified this cultural script and identifies it as “designing a rampage,” which is organized and practiced (p. 252).

Factor 4: Under the Radar – Newman et al. (2004) found school shooters to go under the radar, not giving signs that are commonly identified with troubled kids that are potentially violent. The United States Secret Service (as cited by Newman et al., 2004) identified that “nearly two-thirds of the attackers had never been in trouble or rarely were in trouble at school” (p. 254).

While school shooters may appear to go under the radar, they do give off warning signs or leakage (Mohandie, 2014), which school personnel are not prepared to identify, and schools lack the exchange in communication to identify students with potential problems (Newman et al., 2004).

Newman et al. (2004) identified the downward spiral of a student to be a warning sign that the student needs help. The Secret Service Report (2002) identified that, “nearly all students engaged in behavior—prior to their attacks—that caused concern to at least one person, usually an adult, and most concerned at least three people” (p. 34). In their report, the Secret Service cautioned school officials to address these disciplinary issues carefully so as not to alienate or stigmatize the student. The Secret Service Report recommends the use of Threat Assessment Teams to properly identify potential problems and potentially problem students.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported (as cited in Newman et al., 2004) that school counselors were unaware of students with serious problems, and only one-quarter of the offenders had received psychological counseling

through the school. However, a problem that is consistent throughout the literature is the lack of counselors (Newman et al., 2004). This is supported with a recent report issued by the New Jersey Department of Education, which reported that in the Paterson School District they found an insufficient number of guidance counselors, often the first school official to identify a problem student. The report added that one school had only one guidance counselor to address 700 students, and another guidance counselor was responsible for three elementary schools (Malinconico, 2014).

Newman et al. (2004) further identified violent writings, as a warning sign that goes under the radar. However, due to First Amendment rights afforded all Americans, including students, school principals are concerned about civil litigation (Holtz, 2014), and often go under the radar.

As referenced earlier in this chapter *United States v. Orozco-Santilla* (1990) provides an objective standard in determining the intent of the student's communication: (1) "whether a reasonable person would foresee that the statement would be interpreted by those to whom the maker communicates the statement as a serious expression of intent to harm or assault." (2) "Alleged threats should be considered in light of their entire factual context, including surrounding events and [the] reaction of the listeners" (Mohandie & Hoffman, 2014, p. 72).

Newman et al. (2004) further found that most school shooters had no history with law enforcement; and when they did, such as in Columbine High School, the law enforcement officers were unable to share the information with the school due to the law. In Columbine the SRO was aware of an investigation involving Eric Harris (shooter) threatening another student on his web page and complaints made by the student's

parents to the police; however, the SRO assigned to Columbine High School and aware of the threats was not legally allowed to share the information with the school (Cullen, 2009).

Factor 5: Access to Guns – The United States Secret Service Report's (2002) Key-finding 8 identified most school shooters as having easy access to firearms. Newman et al. (2004) added that a school shooting could not occur without the availability of a weapon, and the casualty count is amplified because of these weapons.

However, not all mass murders in schools are with the use of a firearm:

On May 18, 1927, a 55-year-old man, Andrew Kehoe, used dynamite to bomb the Bath Consolidated School, killing 38 school children, two teachers, a farmer, the postman, and the school superintendent in Bath, Michigan (Bernstein, 2012).

On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, killing 168 people; 19 of the victims were children under the age of six from a day care center (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014).

On May 1, 2001, a 33-year-old man attacked four children with a filet knife at Mountain View Elementary School, Anchorage, Alaska (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014).

On March 23, 2010, a 42-year-old man, Zheng Minsheng, used a knife to stab 13 children, killing eight children at the Nanping City Experimental School in Fujian Province in China (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014).

On December 14, 2012, on the same day that Adam Lanza fatally shot his mother and then proceeded to Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and killed 20 first graders and six staff members before killing himself (Sedensky, 2013), a 36-year-old man, Min Yougjun, proceeded to stab 23 children and an adult at Chenpeng



Village Primary School in Wenshu township, Guanshan County, Henan Province in China (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014).

On February 21, 2014, a 38-year-old man, Antonio Lopez Guzman, wielding a 12-inch knife on the campus at San Jose State University was shot and killed by the police after refusing to drop the knife (Salonga, 2014).

On April 9, 2014, at Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, Pennsylvania, a 16-year-old sophomore student, Alex Hribal, committed an act of active shooter, slashed and stabbed 21 students and a security guard before being tackled by an assistant principal. Alex Hribal used two eight-inch knives he acquired from his kitchen (“Search for Motive,” 2014; Walsh, 2014).

### **Summary**

Throughout this chapter the current literature was reviewed to explore the dilemma principals face in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

The literature used in this study consisted of federal, state, and local legislation to identify the current laws and policies that affect school principals and their decision to keep their school environment safe. The legislation reviewed specifically looked at the Gun Free School Act (GFSA), which prohibits any person to be in or on school property with a weapon (Cornell University Law, 2012). New Jersey law under 2C:39-5, unlawful possession of weapons, specifies the provisions of who can carry a firearm and where.

The current literature on school violence, school shootings, and principals’ responses to these incidents are divided into a proactive approach on preventing school

violence (e.g. mental health, threat assessment teams, school resource officers, etc.) and a reactive approach as a response to school violence and/or school shootings (e.g. active shooter response, armed personnel, zero-tolerance policies, etc.).

## **Chapter III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the dilemma principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education. School principals are responsible for the safety and security of their students, faculty, and parents that come onto school property, which includes transportation on a school bus, during sporting events, special events, parent teacher conferences and other school-related activity.

In the review of the literature on school shootings, there is very little information on the perceptions of school administrators or school principals in regard to having armed personnel in the schools. School principals are given an enormous responsibility to protect the students and the faculty of the school while also ensuring that the schools continue to have a cohesive educational environment. However, there is very little research available on their position, concerns, or recommendations on having armed personnel in their schools (James & McCallion, 2013; Newman et al., 2004; Smith & Smith, 2006).

As part of the research into school shootings and principals' perception of armed personnel in an educational setting, I conducted a multiple-case study of elementary school principals and vice principals of the school district of the City of Paterson, New Jersey.

Through the examination of documents that provided information on the demographics and socioeconomic status of the school district, and the interviews of the principals that work within this school district, the information was used to answer the research questions.

Throughout this chapter, I reveal the process I took in conducting this research, including my background in law enforcement, crisis intervention, and education as well as the reason that I became interested in this topic. I detail the design of the study, including the reason the setting of urban elementary schools was chosen, describe the location, environment, and challenges and include the reason the participants were chosen as well as the profile of the principals and the schools they oversee. I explain how the data were collected and analyzed and identify the procedures taken to ensure that the information gathered, as well as the results, was reliable and validated throughout the entire process.

### **Background**

As a police officer with the Paterson Police Department for 26 years, I am fortunate to have gained the experience that would be essential to conducting this research. I am presently assigned to the office of the chief of police as the executive officer of the police department, where I am involved with the policy and procedures and the day-to-day operations of the department. The City of Paterson is the third largest city in the state of New Jersey with an estimated population of 145,219 (U.S. Census, 2012). The Paterson Police Department has 400 police officers dedicated to protect and serve the residents of the city.

Throughout most of my career with the Paterson Police Department, I have worked in the Detective Bureau, Major Crimes Division, which investigates homicides, assaults, sex crimes, etc. I have also been trained and certified as a hostage negotiator and a crisis counselor with over 24 years of experience in hostage negotiation and crisis intervention.

As an educator, I have been an instructor in the police academy since 1994, where I instructed police recruits and police officers in criminal investigation, active shooter, hostage negotiations, crisis intervention, etc. From 1996 to 2009 I was an adjunct professor at Passaic County Community College, where I taught the following courses: Forensic Science, Juvenile Delinquency, New Jersey Criminal Law, Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Crisis Intervention, Abnormal Psychology, and Police Community Relations. In 2009 I began to teach as an adjunct professor at City University of New York, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where I teach the following courses: Criminal Justice in Eastern Europe, Police Management, Patrol Function, and Investigative Function.

As a result of my background in law enforcement, I am often called to speak on crisis intervention and active shooter incidents. I have highlighted the lack of research on active shooter incidents in relation to schools and school principals throughout the review of the literature. However, the lack of studies should not be confused with media attention to active shooter incidents, which only give the details of the incident as reported, often incorrectly.

Although I have chosen the participants of this study to be principals and vice principals from the Paterson School District; and as indicated, I am a police captain with the Paterson Police Department, my first contact with any of the participants was as a

result of this study. I have no affiliation with the school district of the City of Paterson other than as a volunteer, although in my role as a police officer, I have at times throughout my career participated in investigations that resulted in my responding to a school, interviewing students, parents, or school faculty.

### **Design**

This study is a multiple-case study approach to gather data from several subjects who serve as school building administrators. Qualitative data was collected from interviews of principals and vice principals of public elementary schools in Paterson, New Jersey. To ensure that the research was conducted in accordance with the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research (2011), a letter of solicitation (Appendix A) was sent to the Office of the State Superintendent of Schools in Paterson, New Jersey.

With the permission of the Paterson State Superintendent (Appendix B), the researcher submitted the parameters of the research to the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for their approval (Appendix C). All information was kept confidential in a secured location at the Paterson Police Chief's Office, and no identifying information was released.

As part of the research each principal and vice principal received a letter of solicitation (Appendix D) from the researcher, explaining the parameters of the study and the benefits that the research would provide. Each principal and vice principal received an informed consent form (Appendix E) for his or her review and acceptance if he or she decided to participate in the study (NIH, 2011).

The main purpose of the interviews was to collect data on the principals' perceptions of armed personnel in an educational setting, which were used with the official documents collected, crime statistics, and demographics (Bogden & Biklen, 2007), consistent with the purpose of this study.

The interviews conducted were based on open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to give firsthand accounts of their experiences. The questions were developed on the theoretical framework of this study, postmodernism and critical theory (Creswell, 2009), with the research focused on individuals that have experienced social inequalities (Bogden & Biklen, 2007), individuals that have been "excluded, marginalized, and exploited" in our society, individuals often found in urban communities, which includes the students, parents, and the community—all stakeholders in the education of the students as well as the safety of the students and faculty (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2010, p. 87).

As this is a qualitative study, the data were gathered through interviews, using open-ended questions reviewed and approved by a panel of experts (Appendix F). The interviews took approximately 30 minutes, with follow-up interviews based on the data collected, coded, and analyzed; interviews were conducted at the principal's or vice principal's school or at a location mutually agreeable to the participant and researcher (NIH, 2011).

With the permission of the participants, the interviews were recorded with an audio recording device (Bogden & Biklen, 2007), and note taking as part of the research process ensured proper collection of data in the case of equipment malfunction or if the participant did not want to be recorded (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009).

At the conclusion of the interviews, transcripts were produced based on the interview recordings and/or notes taken to ensure accurate data for the study had been collected (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). The recordings, notes, and transcripts are “helpful to comment on the reliability and value of the data source” and used for coding the responses (Creswell, 2009, p. 183).

The qualitative data for this study also included official documents (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative documents collected for this study are public documents available to the public through the United States Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the New Jersey Open Public Records Act (OPRA), to include the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Uniform Crime Report (UCR), demographic data from the United States Census Report, and school data available from the school district of the City of Paterson and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).

### **Setting**

The City of Paterson is the third largest city in the state of New Jersey, with a population the U.S. Census (2012) has estimated at 145,219 residents. As per its geographical size, the city of Paterson is 8.4 square miles, leaving a large population to reside in a limited area (U.S. Census, 2012). Population divides the City of Paterson into six individual wards with 12 voting districts (City of Paterson, 2014), and the school district is divided along the ward and district lines.

The demographic information for the City of Paterson, retrieved from the United States Census Bureau (2012), is relevant to this study:



Table 4

*City of Paterson Demographics*

	<b>City of Paterson</b>	<b>State of New Jersey</b>
• Population	145,219	8,867,749
• High School Graduates	71.3%	87.9%
• Bachelors Degree	10.3%	35.4%
• Persons below poverty	27.6%	9.9%
• Hispanics	57.6%	17.7%
• Blacks	31.7%	13.7%
• Whites	9.2%	59.3%
• Under 18 years old	27.9%	23.5%
• Foreign Born	29.7%	20.8%
• Language other than English spoken at home	62.5%	29.6%

Source: United States Census Bureau 2012 Estimates

The City of Paterson School District, a District Factor Group (DFG) A, has been under a state takeover since 1991, when the State of New Jersey placed school control under a State School Superintendent answerable to the New Jersey State Department of Education (Paterson Public Schools, 2014). District Factor Groups are indicators of the socioeconomic status (SES) of the community in its school district (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2004). As a District Factor Group (DFG) A, the state of New Jersey has identified the City of Paterson School District as “A,” the state’s lowest socioeconomic status (SES) for districts (NJDOE, 2004).

As part of this study the researcher reviewed the demographics of the City of Paterson provided by the United States Census Bureau and the information provided by the New Jersey Department of Education and the Paterson Public School District,

gathered the relevant information, and used the information to develop and prepare questions for the interviews with the principals and vice principals.

In 2012 the City of Paterson had 88 shootings that resulted in 112 victims, while in 2013 the City of Paterson had 90 shootings that resulted in 103 victims (Courtesy: Paterson Police Department).

Table 5

*Non-Fatal Shootings for 2012/2013*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Incidents</b>	<b>Victims</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
2012	88	112	97	15
2013	90	103	95	8

Courtesy: Paterson Police Department

In 2012 the City of Paterson had 24 homicides that resulted in 24 victims, while in 2013 the City of Paterson had 17 homicides that resulted in 18 victims (Courtesy: Paterson Police Department)

Table 6

*Homicides for 2012/2013*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Incidents</b>	<b>Victims</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
2012	24	24	20	4
2013	17	18	17	1

Courtesy: Paterson Police Department

Although none of these incidents occurred inside a school, each one of these incidents occurred within 1,000 feet of a public school in the City of Paterson.

Regarding the selling of controlled dangerous substances (illegal drugs) within 1000 feet of a school (Gann, 2014, pp. 152-153), New Jersey State law 2C: 35-7, which reads, “Distribution on or within 1,000 feet of school property . . . shall result in a term of imprisonment” provides for the validation of the earlier statement regarding homicides and shootings that have occurred within 1000 feet of a school.

The Narcotics/Vice Bureau of the Paterson Police Department, in order to enforce and charge drug dealers with NJ 2C: 35-7, have created a map identifying the areas that fall under this statute. Each of the shootings and homicides that have occurred in the years of 2012 and 2013 have occurred within 1,000 feet of a school, identifying the relationship that each principal has with this subject and, as a result, this study.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study are principals and vice principals that have been given the enormous responsibility of not only educating the elementary school students of the City of Paterson, but also ensuring the safety of the students, parents, faculty, and all persons having business with their schools.

The researcher chose principals and vice principals as the participants because of their responsibility and personal connections to all the stakeholders involved. Principals and vice principals, by the nature of their administrative titles, are in the position to make the necessary decisions regarding armed personnel in an educational setting.

The school district of the City of Paterson has 34 elementary schools with 34 principals and 44 vice principals; in addition, the school district has four elementary academies with four principals and four vice principals for a potential of 86 participants available (Paterson Public Schools, 2014).

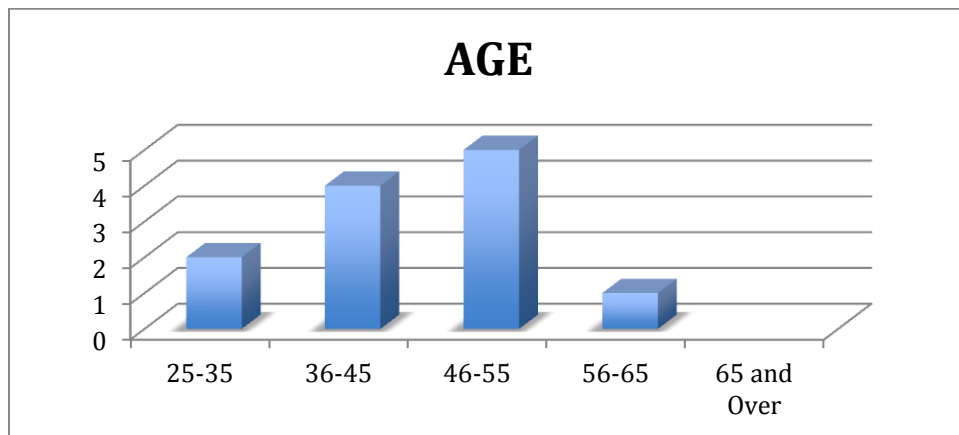
Of the 86 potential participants, 12 participants, two from each of the six wards, were chosen randomly through a simple random sample, using a random numbers table (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003). The researcher used a random numbers table (Appendix G) from the Rand Corporation (1955), which ensured an unbiased selection of the participants available for the study (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003).

### **Profiles of the Participants**

In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the 12 of 86 potential candidates that agreed to be part of this study the participants are not identified by name. Pseudonyms have been chosen to protect their anonymity.

Of the 12 participants in this study, nine principals were between the ages of 36 and 45, while one was between the ages of 56 and 65, and two were between the ages of 25 and 35.

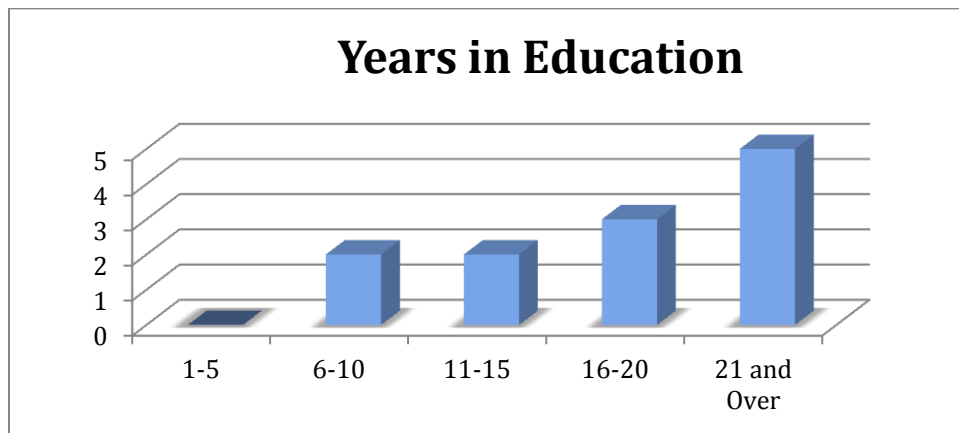
### **Participants' Age**



*Figure 1.* Participants' Age.

Of the 12 participants in this study, five principals had more than 21 years in the field of education, while five had between 11 and 20 years in education and two had between 6 and 10 years in education.

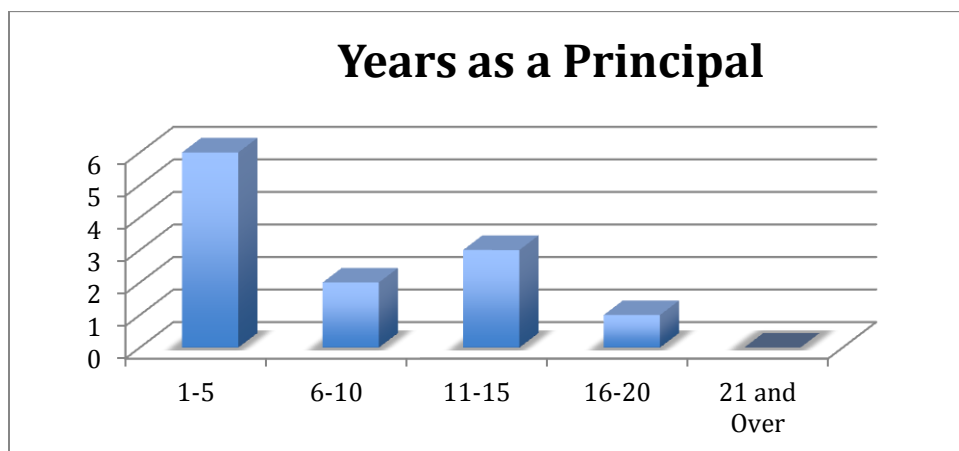
**Participants' Years in Education**



*Figure 2. Participants' Years in Education*

Of the 12 participants in this study, six participants had between 1 and 5 years as a principal, while five had between 6 and 16 years in education, and one had between 16 and 20 years as a principal.

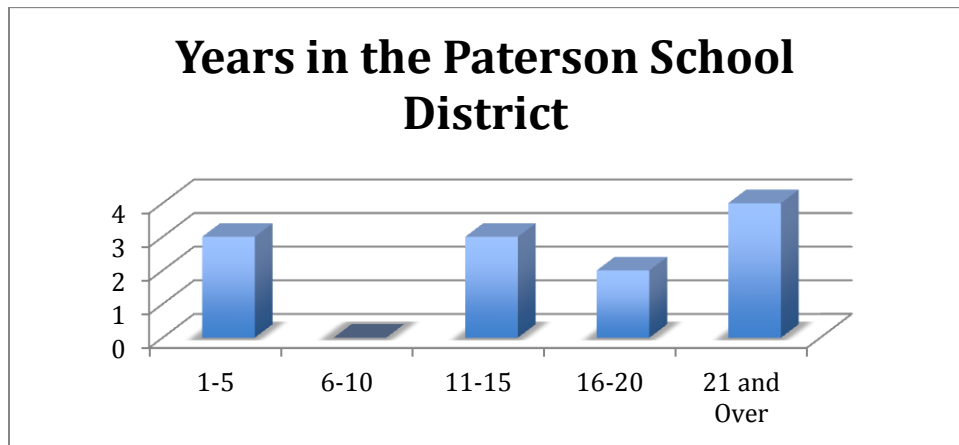
**Participants' Years as a Principal**



*Figure 3. Participants' Years as a Principal*

Of the 12 participants in this study, three principals had worked between one and five years in the Paterson School District, five had between 11 and 20 years in the School District, and four had more than 21 years in the Paterson School District.

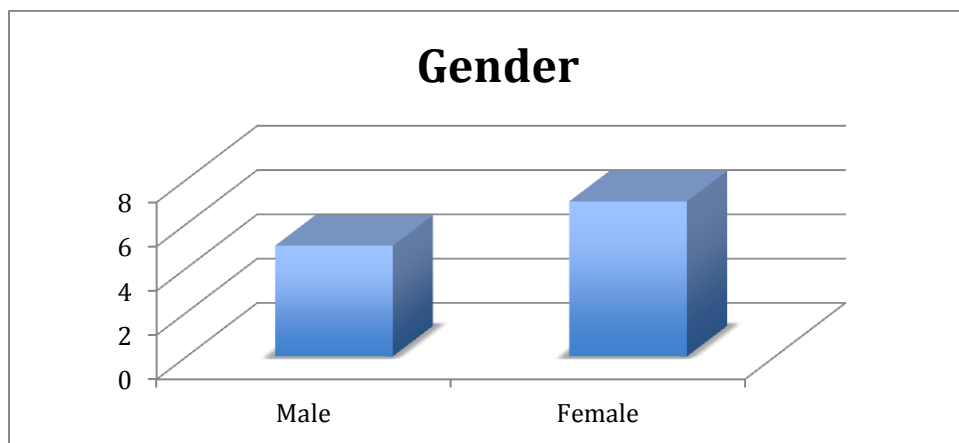
#### **Participants' Years in the Paterson School District**



*Figure 4.* Participants' Years in the Paterson School District

Of the 12 participants in this study, five of the principals were male, while seven of the principals were female.

#### **Participants' Gender**



*Figure 5.* Participants' Gender

**Nora Temple**

Ms. Temple is an educator who has been a principal between 6 and 10 years. She has been with the Paterson School District throughout her career, over 21 years. Ms. Temple is between the ages of 46 and 55.

As an experienced educator, she has worked in multiple district schools, providing insight that comes with her experience and knowledge.

**Irene Jansen**

Ms. Jansen has been a principal between one and five years. She has been an educator between 16 and 20 years and with the Paterson School District for 11 to 15 years. Ms. Jansen is between the ages of 46 and 55. She has been a principal for one to five years and has many years of experience in multiple schools throughout the district.

Ms. Jansen brought to this study a great deal of experience and knowledge based on her years of working with troubled students throughout the district.

**Marie Browning**

Ms. Browning has been principal between one and five years. Ms. Browning is between the ages of 36 and 45 and has been an educator between 11 and 15 years.

Ms. Browning brought to this study not only the perspective of being an educator, but the perspective of being a victim; and throughout the interview she accurately described the facts, circumstances, and feelings surrounding being the victim of outside forces; i.e., the perpetrators of the assault, as well as the feeling of abandonment and re-victimization by the judicial system.

**Ilsa Lund**

Ms. Lund has been a principal between 6 and 10 years and has been with the Paterson School District throughout her career. Ms. Lund is between the ages of 56 and 65 and has been an educator for over 21 years.

As an experienced educator, she has worked in multiple schools throughout the district, which allowed her to bring a unique knowledge to this study.

**Richard Blaine**

Mr. Blaine has been a principal between one and five years and has worked with the school district between 11 and 15 years. Mr. Blaine is between the ages of 36 and 45 and has been an educator between 16 and 20 years.

**Rose Sayer**

Ms. Sayer has been a principal between 11 and 15 years and has been with the school district throughout her career, over 21 years. Ms. Sayer is between the ages of 46 and 55.

As an experienced educator, she has worked in multiple schools throughout the district, providing insight that comes with her experience and knowledge.

**D. H. Reilly**

Mr. Reilly is a principal who within the past five years came to the Paterson School District from another district, bringing with him an additional perspective. He is between the ages of 25 and 35 years and has been an educator between 6 and 10 years.



**Harold Morgan**

Mr. Morgan has been a principal between 16 and 20 years and has been with the school district throughout his career, over 21 years. Mr. Morgan is between the ages of 46 and 55.

As an experienced educator he has worked in multiple schools throughout the district providing specific insights to the district, students, parents and the different communities that he has been involved with.

**Vivian Rutledge**

Ms. Rutledge has been a principal between one and five years and has been with the Paterson School District between 11 and 15 years. Ms. Rutledge is between the ages of 36 and 45 and has been an educator between 11 and 15 years.

**Frank McCloud**

Mr. McCloud has been a principal between 11 and 15 years and has been with the Paterson School District throughout his career, over 21 years. Mr. McCloud is between the ages of 36 and 45.

As an experienced educator, he has worked in multiple schools throughout the district, providing insight that comes with his experience and knowledge.

**James Frazier**

Mr. Frazier has been a principal between one and five years and has been with the Paterson School District between one and five years. He is between the ages of 25 and 35 and has been an educator between 6 and 10 years.

As a young educator, he has worked in multiple schools throughout the district and provided valuable information to this study.

### **Rose Cullen**

Ms. Cullen has been a principal between 11 and 15 years and has been with the Paterson School District between 16 and 20 years. Ms. Cullen is between the ages of 46 and 55 and has been an educator between 16 and 20 years.

As an experienced educator, she has worked in multiple schools throughout the district, providing insight that comes with her experience and knowledge.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure that the data collected throughout the study were valid and reliable, the researcher took certain steps to verify that validity and reliability had been maintained throughout the study. A panel of experts of principals, who were not participants in the study, was selected because of their experience and knowledge. A letter of solicitation requesting their participation and explanation of the study was sent to the panel of experts for their review and consent (Appendix F). These principals reviewed and offered comments on the interview questions used in this study. Based on their review of the interview questions, I revised certain questions to provide for a maximum of quality information from the participants. An example of the changes made included working to ensure the anonymity of the participants, specifically because they were all going to be from the same school district, as well as ensuring the questions were relevant to the subject matter.

Nolan and Heinzen (2012) in their book, *Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences*, wrote, “A valid measure is one that measures what it is was intended to be measure,” and “a reliable measure is one that is constant” (p. 9).

Creswell (2009) wrote in his book, *Research Design*, on qualitative reliability, “The researcher checks for accuracy of the findings,” while on qualitative validity, “The researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (p.190).

Bogden and Biklen (2007) wrote in their book, *Qualitative Research for Education*, “Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the consistency across different observations” (p. 40).

The researcher ensured the validity and reliability throughout this qualitative study by having taken certain steps as recommended by Creswell (2009).

The researcher reviewed all the transcripts and notes taken during the interviews to ensure that any obvious mistake was corrected prior to proceeding to the next step. The researcher provided the participants a copy of their transcripts for their review for descriptive validity. It allowed the participants an opportunity to review the data and verify the accuracy. The researcher then reviewed the coded material to ensure the codes were consistent with the data collected, and that there were no drifts among the codes with the data or themes established. The researcher clarified any bias that the researcher may have had while conducting the study. “Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, such as their gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin” (Creswell,

209, p. 192). The researcher continued this process of checking and double-checking the data and verifying its validity and reliability through the use of peer review (Creswell, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

The research consisted of a qualitative multiple-case study where the researcher examined the descriptive data, interviews, transcripts, field notes, observations, and demographic data collected throughout this study and compared the data with the review of the literature.

The research sought to answer the research questions presented in Chapter I:

1. Do inner city school principals perceive the safety threat to be from within the school or outside the school?
2. How do school principals in one urban New Jersey school district address school safety for the students and faculty?
3. How do inner city school principals perceive the presence, or knowledge, of armed personnel as influencing, or deterring, potential school violence?
4. Do school principals perceive students and faculty to be safer with armed personnel present within the school, or do they perceive armed personnel to create a threatening environment?

Using the research questions, a series of interview questions were developed for this study and reviewed by a panel of experts, who commented and provided input to further the study. As a result of the review of the literature and the research questions, the following interview questions were developed for the purpose of this study.

Table 7

*List of Interview Questions Developed Based on the Research Questions*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
1. Do inner city school principals perceive the safety threat to be from within the school or outside the school?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your concerns regarding a student being a victim or perpetrator of a violent act, (e.g., stabbing, shooting) in your school?</li> <li>2. What are your concerns regarding a faculty member being the victim or perpetrator of a violent act, (e.g., stabbing, shooting) in your school?</li> <li>3. What are your concerns with an outsider coming into the school to commit a violent act against a faculty member or student (e.g. domestic violence, parent, etc.) in your school?</li> </ol>
2. How do school principals in one urban New Jersey school district address school safety for the students and faculty?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What safety measures have been instituted to provide for a safe school?</li> <li>2. What training has been, or needs to be, provided for teachers to protect themselves and their students in the case of a perpetrator committing an act of violence?</li> <li>3. What education has been, or needs to be, provided for students to be part of creating a safe environment in school?</li> <li>4. Are mental health initiatives, part of your strategy to create a safe school environment? Explain.</li> </ol>
3. How do inner city school principals perceive the presence, or knowledge, of armed personnel as influencing, or deterring, potential school violence?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What personnel should be armed, if any?</li> <li>2. Does, or would, the presence of armed personnel in your school have a positive effect in resolving issues of school violence? Does, or would, their presence have a negative effect that escalates the issues of school violence?</li> <li>3. What options are available for a safe and secure school, other than armed personnel?</li> </ol>
4. Do school principals perceive students and faculty to be safer with armed personnel present within the school, or do they perceive armed personnel to create a threatening environment?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you received comments from faculty about armed personnel in the school?</li> <li>2. Have you received comments from students about armed personnel in the school?</li> </ol>

The research was guided by the problem statement described in Chapter I, the limited information on school shootings and the perceptions of principals on having armed personnel in an educational setting (James & McCallion, 2013; Smith & Smith, 2006). This research analyzed the data by coding the data and providing for similarities or differences or other information provided by the participant principals. An analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews included reactions, comments, consensus, and dissent to the questions.

Upon recovering the data through the participants' interviews, the researcher continued the process of analyzing the data. Creswell (2009) wrote that the process of data analysis begins while the data are being collected, with the researcher beginning to make interpretation of the data. As the data were gathered and analyzed, the researcher began to get a better understanding of the information. "Some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back layers of an onion" (Creswell, 2009, p. 183).

Bogden and Biklen (2007) recommend that analysis of the data should begin in the field, gathering information that will help develop analytical questions and develop appropriate themes for the study. Once the raw data were collected and reviewed to ensure validity and reliability, the researcher organized and prepared the data for analysis (Creswell, 2009).

All the collected data, interviews, transcripts, and field notes were thoroughly reviewed in preparation for the coding of the data, which resulted in the development of themes and descriptions that assisted the researcher with the interpretation of the information gathered for this study (Creswell, 2009).

Table 8

*List of Codes Used in the Research*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-Code</b>	<b>Sub-Theme</b>
AP	Armed Personnel	pri tea apo rpo non	Principal Teacher Active Police Officer Retired Police Officer None
PS	Physical Security	cam dls buz sec	Cameras Door Locks Buzzer / Bell Security Guard
PP	Policy and Procedures	acp ldp shp smo	Active Shooter Procedure Lockdown Procedure Shelter in Place Procedure Sign in to Main Office Procedure
CM	Communication	hib pbs beh tru	Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Positive Behavior and Socialization in Schools Behavior Trust
MH	Mental Health	cdt ssw sgc cst sac	Current Data School Social Worker School Guidance Counselor Child Study Team Substance Abuse Coordinator
CO	Concerns	par sub mhc opd bul out	Parents Substitutes Mental Health Counseling Open Doors Bullying Outsider

**Summary**

The research was a qualitative case study, which included observation and interviews with 12 principals from within the City of Paterson public school system. The collected data were coded and analyzed, and additional interviews were conducted based on the information previously collected.

An Introduction/Consent letter was sent to all principals identified to participate in this study. The Introduction/Consent letter explained the research to be conducted, along with its purpose and the estimated amount of time necessary for completing the study.

The Introduction/Consent letter further provided the participants a statement of data confidentiality and assurance of anonymity. Only the principal researcher had access to the data, which were locked in a secured desk at the Paterson Police Department.



## **Chapter IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. School principals were interviewed, and their answers were collected and analyzed to provide valuable information regarding their perceptions towards school shootings and armed school personnel.

As a result of the interviews, various themes emerged that were relevant to this study. Creswell (2009) writes, “Qualitative researchers can do much with themes to build additional layers of complex analysis” (p. 189). The themes presented in this study show that many layers that are associated with the perceptions that a principal has in regard to armed personnel and what actually makes for a best environment in an educational setting.

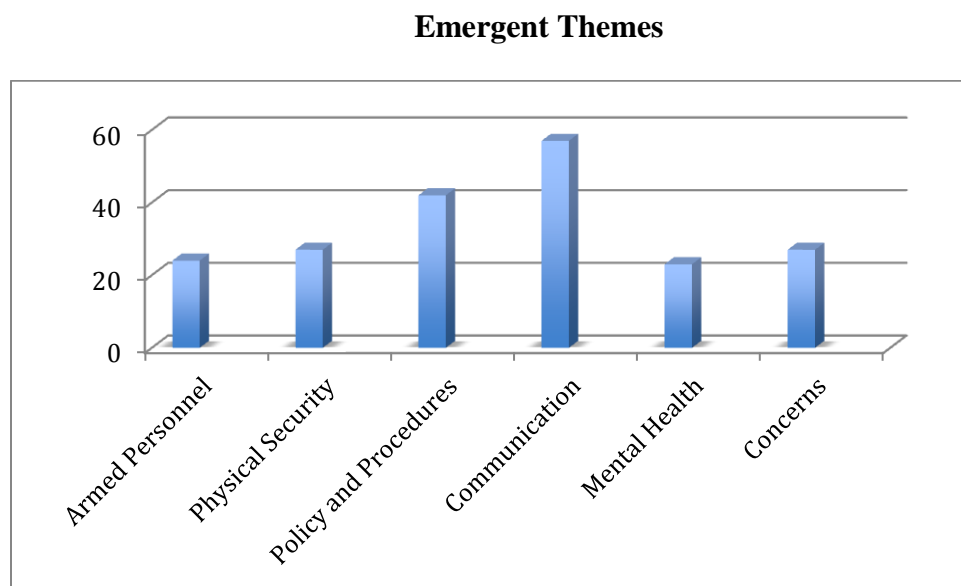
During the interviews conducted of 12 principals/vice principals in the school district of the City of Paterson, New Jersey, on the subject of school shootings and armed personnel, the principals’ responses and approaches to their needs were truly revealing. Their information, experience, and knowledge put a new light on the perception they have when it comes to the safety needs of the staff and students in their schools and what practices they perceive to best fit their environment, taking all stakeholders into account.

#### **Emergent Themes**

As a result of the interviews conducted for this study, the research identified six emergent themes based on the principals’ interviews. Of the 12 interviews conducted, communication was identified as the number one issue. Communication was referenced

57 times by the school principals as the most important issue in regard to the safety of the students and faculty. Communication was followed by Policy and Procedures, which was referenced 42 times; Physical Security and their Concerns were referenced 27 times; Armed Personnel were referenced 24 times; and Mental Health was referenced 23 times.

Throughout the interviews each principal reverted to their policy and procedures to emphasize the degree of importance that they place on the safety and security of their students and faculty. Communication became the emergent theme on which they concentrated when answering questions about their faculty and students. Their answers concerning having armed personnel in their schools were clear and decisive.



*Figure 6. Emergent Themes*

### **Communication**

Throughout the interviews with the school principals, the subject of communication between faculty and students, and between administration and faculty, was a major theme. Principals referred to being able to communicate with the students

and faculty to create a safer educational environment and to provide guidance for students to communicate with their parents.

Through communication, the school principals explained, students and faculty members were able to develop a dialogue imperative to building trust between the students and faculty members. They further spoke about the importance of communication in the building of trust between the administration and faculty.

Furthermore, the school principals interviewed addressed the importance of having communication between the students and faculty and the faculty and the administration in regard to identifying behavioral problems. Through a trusting dialogue with the students and the faculty, behavioral problems can often be identified and addressed in a timely manner and prevent detrimental outcomes that could be avoided if identified in time.

As a result, the two major areas identified in this study in relation to communication are trust and behavior. For the purpose of a better understanding of how the principals relate trust and behavior to student and faculty safety, they are discussed here separately.

### **Trust.**

Due to the proximity in time and space of the teachers and students in an educational setting, it is impossible to separate the safety and security of the students from the safety and security of the teachers and faculty members. The principals of the Paterson Public School District are well aware of the symbiotic relationships between faculty and students and reflected this throughout this study. Ms. Temple expressed this eloquently:

As the administrator, I am dependent on the teachers being able to establish rapport or trust with students. In doing so, it facilitates the student being honest and forthcoming with teachers and administration. Establishing a rapport with the student body is critical (June 30, 2014).

Communication between the faculty and the student body is important not only to identify students who need help, but also to identify other individuals in need that do not come forward. Ms. Temple added the following:

There have been many instances where situations have happened, catastrophic situations have taken place in schools, and many times it was the kids that were the quietest, the ones that didn't say anything, but they were saying a great deal with their behavior (June 30, 2014).

The principals recognized the importance of trust between faculty and students in keeping a safe and secure school. Mr. Morgan added, "We try to foster an environment of openness between the student and the teachers so they feel comfortable, and if they see a threat, immediately they have access to let the authority [know]" (July 9, 2014).

Mr. Blaine added to this point and explained the importance of trust between the faculty and students, "I stress a culture in the building that they could tell me anything [they know]; telling everything is confidential" (July 8, 2014).

Student trust is such a major component in creating a safe educational environment that the sentiments of the teachers were similar in the area of trust between faculty and students. Ms. Temple expressed this as follows:

Well, there has to be a buy in, first of all, by the students to believe that trust is possible. Students have a history of distrust that's not going to happen, so we need

to start bringing that trust before we bring in any type of education as far as security and safety. If the students don't feel that it belongs to them and that they have ownership, its not going to happen. That is just the nature of the beast—that if you don't feel that it is really meaningful to you, bottom line is what does it mean to me, as the student. The maturity level of the student also needs to be taken into account (June 30, 2014).

The principals were clear advocates for their students, understanding that trust must be earned. This is not an easy task when dealing with children from an urban area with all the problems that are common to children from a low socioeconomic status.

Ms. Temple said, “They need to know that there is someone on their side, advocating on their behalf” (June 30, 2014).

The importance of listening is not lost on the principals. Ms. Sayer explained:

I always allow a student an opportunity to talk to me. Why did you do this? What were you thinking? What's in your head? Very often a student will open up and begin to talk, and I think that's important. I think that they're babies, yes, but little problems that might seem silly to me are real to them and so they need the opportunity to express themselves. I think that will curtail a lot of violence because children have an outlet to let their emotions out (July 8, 2014).

Mr. Morgan also described being able to listen to the student regarding what happened, to be able to gather all the information before jumping to judgment. Mr. Morgan said, “We always know that there are two sides to every incident. We try to be fair, while also letting the parents know right away of the incident, so they can assist in the investigation, and also in the resolution” (July 9, 2014).

Ms. Browning explained that after the incident where people entered the building and assaulted her, it was important to explain why procedures are needed and followed. Ms. Browning said, “I think that having that conversation with our students after the incident and pretty much explaining to them what took place [and] what my role was” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge proceeded to give an example of the importance of having open communication with students. “We had one child that I was a little concerned about. Through social therapy with our social worker, he’s no longer a concern” (July 14, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge identified an area of communication where it is important to get professional mental health providers involved. “When I talk to parents and I feel that a kid needs something, I always offer the service of a mental health provider. This is one of the few schools that have that service available. All schools have social workers but they’re primarily for special education students, not for helping students with social emotional needs” (July 14, 2014).

In his interview Mr. Morgan added to the importance of communication between faculty and students and included the importance of the child communicating with his or her parents. Mr. Morgan added, “We try to make sure that we have a conversation on how to be safe, but also foster that conversation to happen at home. We send flyers home that simulate a conversation between parent and child. Ultimately it’s our responsibility at school; but if we can share between the school and home, that’s always a good strategy” (July 9, 2014).

Communication has to move beyond the school, as Ms. Rutledge explained how important it is to have an open communication with the community. Ms. Rutledge said,

One of the things that I have done is to have really good relationships with my school family. I go outside to [the local stores]. I walk up and down the street so that people know me. I talk to you . . . I stay to interact with the parents and get the pulse of the neighborhood, what's going on, who's getting divorced, or who's acting out (July 14, 2014).

The importance of trust between all stakeholders involved in the education of the children is paramount to their safety.

Through trust, the principals have established a great tool in protecting students, teachers, faculty, and the administration. As Mr. Frazier put it, "Here . . . we kind of know what's going on before it happens; we are able to be proactive to stop any fights from happening" (July 15, 2014).

The principals interviewed were clear in explaining that the process of trust is all encompassing; students, teachers, faculty, administration, and parents have to, as Ms. Temple said, "buy in," to provide for a safe and secure school for the students and all stakeholders. Ms. Temple explained, "Part of my responsibilities is to maintain a safe and healthy educational environment. It is important to be able to communicate this to the faculty, not just with words but with action."

Ms. Temple went on to explain further:

Once trust has been established between the administration and the staff, any new staff member who has not established that rapport, is able to see the veteran staff doing it [establishing rapport] and are willing to do the same (June 30, 2014).

Mr. Frazier emphasized the importance of creating an environment of trust, and the importance of having a good relationship with your students and faculty. "We're such

a close-knit staff. I have [number] teaching staff members, probably about [number] staff members. No one is an outlier or loner in this building (July 15, 2014).

### **Behavior.**

As the principals spoke of the importance of having open and honest communication with their students and staff, they emphasized through these communications that they are able to identify behavioral problems that need to be addressed. Identifying the behavior of the students and faculty members that signaled they had a problem or needed some form of assistance became a great source of information for this study.

Ms. Temple said the following was important for the administration to do:

To make sure that the staff is mindful of their surroundings, paying attention to the behavior patterns of the students. The most inconsequential behavior may turn out to be a puzzle piece, if you will, to figuring out the intentions of the student. Again, the adults having a presence and knowing the students and noticing any changes and communicating that to the administration is crucial so that appropriate measures can be taken (June 30, 2014).

Ms. Temple continued to explain the difference in student behavior in an elementary school environment:

The kindergartener coming in, not yet developed socially, and the eighth grader who may feel he walks on water and thinks that no one else has the right answer for him causes one to pause and reflect on how does each child see security and safety (June 30, 2014).



Ms. Temple expressed that in an elementary school, we are dealing with children at multiple developmental stages from K-8. These children range in age from five (5) to fourteen (14) years and come from a community with a low socioeconomic status (Paterson Public Schools, 2013). The United States Census Bureau (2012) has equated that 27.6% of the population in the City of Paterson is living below the poverty level.

Through the interview with the principals, the information gathered in the United States Census, the Paterson Police crime data and Paterson Public Schools data, the challenges the students and parents have become more apparent. Ms. Lund emphasized how important it is to be vigilant to children's behavior,

Many of our students are taught at home that the police are a negative figure in their lives. If they can interact with the police in a positive way, they will not see them as being an armed negative influence in their lives (July 3, 2014).

Mr. Blaine was able to reveal an incident of concern for him and for many educators:

A lot of students don't understand the consequences of their actions, "What is the big deal of me having a knife in my book bag?" Many feel that "I need to protect myself; I live in Paterson" (July 8, 2014).

Mr. Blaine continued by describing the incident that identified the students with knives in their school bags:

I said, "Why do you have a knife in the building? Is there something wrong? Are you afraid of anything?" Their response to me was, "We were playing *Scream* at home." They were watching the movie *Scream* and they were chasing each other with knives. When I asked, "Where was your mom?" The reply was, "Mom was

sleeping.” So, now my thinking was, now of course the kids are going to get punished for bringing in a weapon into the school but my concern is they are not being educated at home about the dangers of weapons (July 8, 2014).

Mr. Blaine explained further:

So, they didn’t understand what the big deal was. The fourth grader cried a little bit. The second grader thought it was nothing, and I explained to them that if they were older they would have been arrested and put in jail. Also, they’re watching *Scream*, which is a movie where characters go around killing people. These kids are watching such shows and then acting them out (July 8, 2014).

Ms. Cullen provides further insight. She looks at the children’s environment as a part of their behavior and a window to understanding them:

I think that many of our children here in the city have become so accustomed to a level of violence that they have a sense of immunity to it. They’re not shocked by what they see or hear, so I think, more sensitivity training is needed to let them know that this is not the norm on how things should happen in school, in or around schools (July 17, 2014).

Mr. Blaine also identified the home and environment as important to understanding the child:

The first issue that I have is that I need to see where the students are coming from. What kind of home life that they have, and where their parents are coming from. We have some students in our building that are actually parents to their siblings because their mom and dad are working multiple jobs or they have issues with

either alcohol or drugs, so they're forced into taking care of their brothers and sisters (July 8, 2014).

The importance of the parent has not been lost to any of these educators. Ms. Sayer said, "Of course when we educate the students, we educate their parents with notices that are sent home and with conversations (July 8, 2014).

The principals identified the importance of being vigilant to the behavior of the faculty as well as the student body. Ms. Temple was very perceptive:

I think that interconnected communication is needed between staff and all personnel, from lunch monitors, to security guards, to secretary, to pay attention to all the nuances going on whether there is a change of behavior patterns by students or communication from other students about a specific student. None of that should be dismissed, and none of that information should be taken lightly. There must be an awareness shared by the entire administration and staff, from the janitorial staff to the faculty to the secretarial staff to everyone in the building. There must be communication and understanding of what the expectations are of safety and security. We are not just going to let security personnel handle what are community concerns, school community concerns (June 30, 2014).

Ms. Jansen was concerned about the well being of her staff as well:

If I notice that a faculty member is very agitated towards any person, whether it be towards a student, towards an administrator, or a colleague, we try to pull them in and talk to them to see what's happening. If during the conversation, we are at a meeting and we see that they're rising, we try to stay down and get them back

down, or just monitor the conversation to make sure they're ok, things of that nature (July 3, 2014).

Mr. McCloud also expressed concern for his faculty:

They need to take our neighborhood very seriously. Times have changed in Paterson, so faculty need to become more aware of signs to look for, if somebody is packing, if somebody is wearing a heavy coat, they might be carrying a [fire]arm, they have to be more aware of that. Those are the kinds of things I would like to see teachers trained in a little more, including signs of gangs (July 14, 2014).

The principals further emphasized the importance of training and education for both staff and students. They were clear in their understanding that identifying behavior that may be of concern was not easily identifiable, but could be learned.

Mr. Blaine said, "Ultimately our top priority is to keep the kids safe. Teachers need to understand that part of their job is safety and to educate students on how to be safe, to know what's right and what's wrong" (July 8, 2014).

Ms. Jansen went further into the need to identify behavior that may require an intervention:

I do believe that we need to do training on triggers within the student population on what things we should notice as faculty staff members. We need to understand what things will trigger a student to just go off. Sometimes I don't think adults realize that if a child comes in and they're agitated, and then you ask, "What's going on?" The student may not want to talk about it; let's kind of leave it, keep a watch on it. To keep asking, "What is the matter . . . why you don't want to talk

about it?” You just escalate the situation at that point. I think that we need to provide training on student behavior for everyone on the staff, not just the teachers (July 3, 2014).

Mr. McCloud and Ms. Jansen applauded an educational program for the students in schools, Positive Behavior and Socialization in Schools (PBSIS):

The school district had just implemented PBSIS, which is positive behavior; it’s a whole program that the district had us going to training for the first year of implementation. This year we will be training the students and we are talking about bullying. What is bullying? Everyone wants to make everything bullying, but what is bullying? (July 3, 2014).

Other training and education available to students include the subject of bullying. The principals interviewed explained the importance of having these programs available and the personnel to intervene when a student is found to be a victim or perpetrator of bullying. Mr. Sayer explained that they have trained personnel in the schools to address the issue of bullying. “We have an HIB specialist—that’s Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying; that person does seminars with students” (July 8, 2014).

Ms. Lund and Mr. Reilly focused on the role of the student, family, and community. Ms. Lund commented as follows:

I think that there needs to be a lot more training for the students, and I think a lot of it needs to be in the form of counseling. A lot of students come from aggressive families, or live in aggressive environments. They come from gang-related families where their parents are gang members. The children grow up in an environment where they are taught to deal with confrontational situations. When

there is any conflict, they tend deal with it aggressively. I think that we need not only education but also counseling to begin to address those needs (July 3, 2014).

Mr. Reilly agreed. “I hate to say it, but some of our students contribute to the school being unsafe. Often they don’t know how to translate, how they should act here versus how they should act at home, how they should act at church” (July 8, 2014).

Communication with students and faculty is the number one issue identified in this study. Building trust is a part of communication. The importance of trust between all stakeholders is paramount, and understanding and identifying inappropriate and concerning behavior of students and/or faculty is crucial to a safe and secure educational environment.

### **Policy and Procedures**

One of the uniting themes of all the principals in this study is the policy and procedures of the Paterson School District and NJDOE. The principals were adamant about the staff and students being prepared by conducting active shooter drills, lockdown drills, shelter in place drills, bomb drills, and fire drills. Ms. Browning said about her staff preparation, “Our teachers and other faculty members are well trained. The administrative team is well trained. Our safety plan is reviewed yearly” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Browning further identified an area that all teachers have to be cognitive about during a drill, which is used to prepare the faculty to react in the event of an actual incident. “Even when teachers don’t have students, they have to understand that they too, must participate in the drill” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Lund echoed the sentiment that all the principals said about their staff, “They are trained regularly, there are safety drills that are conducted regularly where staff are

constantly informed how to proceed. If a perpetrator enters the school building, staff must know what is to happen, what is to occur” (July 3, 2014).

Mr. Blaine echoed the sentiment. “We do lockdown drills, and I want to make sure that the staff is prepared for, God forbid, somebody coming into the building, knowing what they need to do” (July 8, 2014).

Another principal, Mr. Reilly, addressed the importance of, not only his faculty and students being prepared through the process of the described drills, but also ensuring that the security personnel are properly trained and understand their responsibility. Mr. Reilly said, “Here, we definitely practice all the necessary drills. We do a lockdown, lock in, and fire drills. We have downstairs, a former police officer, trained with all the right protocols. He in turn supervises our security team” (July 8, 2014).

Mr. Morgan emphasized the importance of procedures to provide safety, “We have procedures in place, we have lockdowns, we have code words that are said over the loud speakers to ensure safety, not to prevent it, because it is very hard to prevent it, but at least to keep a level of security as high as possible in this kind of event” (July 9, 2014).

The principals emphasized the importance of knowing who is in the building and for what purpose. Ms. Rutledge explained a procedure she has added to her school. “One of the things that I put into place is that I do not allow more than five adults in the building at a time. No one can get upstairs until nine o’clock” (July 14, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge proceeded to describe an incident that occurred in her school that emphasized the importance of the school policies and procedures.

I can tell you that in 2012-2013 our kids were out in the playground and a kid saw somebody going towards the dumpster with what looked like a shotgun, like a

rifle, and he told one of the lunch monitors. Fortunately, the lunch monitor had the wherewithal to bring the kids in, contact security, and security contacted me. I locked down the building and I called who I had to call. It turned out to be a lawnmower piece. But making sure that kids are aware of their surroundings and letting kids know that whatever you say, we believe and, O.K, did we lose maybe twenty minutes of instruction, yes, but at the end of the day, I'd rather be safe, losing twenty minutes of instruction than losing a hair on a kid's head. Things like that, just being prepared and knowing what to do and then just doing it. It turned out that it was a lawnmower part, and I know that it made [media], but it showed how we lockdown (July 14, 2014).

The importance of policy and procedures cannot be understated, and the principals interviewed took these policies to heart and were adamant about the importance of following the drills and conducting their safety plans. However, the greater issue that arose from the interviews regarding policy and procedures came from incidents that had actually occurred, where outsiders attempted to enter the building.

Ms. Temple expressed the importance of having a policy regarding people entering the building, "being able to vet whoever is coming into the building would be a priority and trying to put into place whatever the processes or protocols to maintain safety" (June 30, 2014).

Ms. Jansen explained a problem that her school had experienced before she began working in her school "Parents had carte blanche; they could just walk around the building so we implemented a policy that they had to come into the main office to get a



hall pass first” (July 3, 2014). The process of having all persons sign in before entering the building is a policy that has been followed by all principals and their security staff.

All the principals interviewed identified having a security guard at the front door as crucial to school safety:

As for the front door, I am concerned that there is a security guard at the front desk in order to see anyone coming up the steps and into the building. There is a security guard posted at the front desk, and that desk is manned at all times. We do have security guards patrolling the hallways consistently, one on each floor. We have drills, safety drills, and the students are well practiced in those drills (July 8, 2014).

During the interview with Mr. Frazier, he expressed the importance of security guards and their front door policies:

The security guard is the first line of defense. So, we’ve done a good job trying to eliminate the amount of doors that people are able to utilize during the school day; that’s a big piece in regard to the facility side of safety.

Mr. Frazier, just like all the other principals interviewed, identified the importance of having all exterior doors locked and monitored and the challenges that come with doing that:

Obviously the front door is locked at all times. You have to buzz in and the security guard has to check you in at the front door. We also installed a program where even though there are side doors to go in and out, everybody must enter and exit the building through the front door. We’ve had some problems where people have been written up and talked to, no more putting in blocks to open

doors to run to your car, because all it takes is one second for an intruder to enter (July 15, 2014).

Mr. McCloud explained the daily procedure in his school, but at this time it was not available to all the schools. Mr. McCloud said, “The only way someone gets in is through the buzzer system. We only let people in via the camera because we have cameras at all the entrances. If we know them, we let them in. The guards tend to go to the doors directly and have people sign in. That procedure is all set” (July 14, 2014).

The principals interviewed found comfort in the preparedness through the policy and procedures. They even identified and put into place additional policies that allowed them to further secure their school specifically regarding signing into the school.

### **Physical Security**

When the principals were interviewed for this study, they were asked about the safety of their school, students, faculty and what areas they needed to ensure school safety. The one issue that was overwhelming was physical security, which included their security guards, surveillance cameras, doors and their locks, and a buzzer or bell for the front entrance.

As previously mentioned, although the title of the study is *School Shootings and Principals’ Perception of Armed Personnel in an Educational Setting*, school principals interviewed found that their physical security people were their first defense.

The research interview question asked, “What options are available for a safe and secure school other than armed personnel?” Ms. Cullen in answering this question said, “Security cameras, electronic doors, bulletproof windows and glass, additional security personnel” (July 17, 2014).

All the principals interviewed in this study were very serious and concerned with the physical security of their schools. Mr. Frazier said, “I’m very concerned again, about the building safety piece.” He added, “I think the buzzer system is a big piece, other than having the security guard stationed in front at all times” (July 15, 2014).

Ms. Lund said of the buzzer system, “I would like to have our doors buzzed into” (July 3, 2014). While the majority of the schools in the Paterson school district have buzzers for their front doors, not all do. This is a major concern for principals and staff of buildings without buzzers regarding their physical security.

Another area where principals expressed concern was the ability to have a surveillance system in their school. Ms. Lund said, “Cameras, we don’t have cameras . . . 90% [of teachers] were in favor of armed security, 100% of them wanted cameras” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge echoed the statements of Ms. Lund. Ms. Rutledge said, “We don’t have a camera . . . our security in the front desk monitors who’s coming in” (July 14, 2014).

Mr. Blaine addressed it as his first concern, “We have no cameras here; that is my first concern” (July 8, 2014).

While the principals interviewed for this study had concerns about their physical security, they also praised their security personnel. Throughout the interviews they reflected that the security personnel from the security guards to the board security personnel were all a positive part of their school safety team.

Ms. Sayer said, in regard to the security of her school, “Make sure that the security guards are in place” (July 8, 2014).

Mr. Morgan agreed:

It is important to have trained personnel in the school to identify who belongs in the school and who doesn't in areas where strangers, people with not the best intentions, try to come in, that being what it is. Even if the building is secured, we still have issues with the wrong people gaining access. We are always trying to make sure the security is alert (July 9, 2014).

Regarding metal detectors, only two of the 12 principals, Mr. Blaine and Ms. Sayer, during their interviews, mentioned not having metal detectors. This was brought up in passing statements, and they did not add anything to the interview regarding this security measure.

The one security issue that brought the most concern to the school principals was the doors in the school. Ms. Rutledge identified that interior unlocked doors have been changed since the rampage shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. "All the doors have universal locks so that any administrator can get in" (July 14, 2014).

Mr. Blaine echoed a concern of all the principals that it is "very easy to open up the door in the hallway and let an outsider in, an intruder" (July 8, 2014).

Ms. Temple explained that a major security measure for the security of a school was that "doors need to be closed [and] visitors [need] to ring [the] bell" (June 30, 2014).

Mr. Morgan expressed what the other principals had indicated, that their main entrance was the "only exit and entrance from the building for people who come in from the outside" (July 9, 2014).

To emphasize her concerns, Ms. Browning described an incident that had occurred where the safety of the students, faculty, and administration became apparent:

We had a semi-riot take place where I was the only administrator on duty, as the other two administrators were out of the building. We had intruders come in from the outside during our school lunch period, and they physically assaulted me and some of the other staff (July 3, 2014).

Some of our students didn't take it seriously. It wasn't until they saw the cops come in, with their weapons drawn, when they said, "Oh, my goodness, this is serious." We had some kids that weren't following what was happening come out to the hallway when the intruders were coming in to attack our faculty (July 3, 2014).

As a result of that incident, Ms. Browning explained the following changes:

There are two further updates since that incident. One was putting in a new phone line in the principal's office so that if an intruder gets into the office, which happened during that time, the principal can lock himself in and act from an emergency phone. The other updates were that the district changed the window and doors to more sturdy doors with smaller windows on the door. More sturdy locks were put in, and locks were added in some of the classrooms like the gym areas that didn't initially have locks so that those kids could be sheltered in if necessary. One area we are still trying to fix is our call system so that if there is an issue, our staff could hear [communicate] across the school (July 3, 2014).

Principals interviewed showed more concern regarding having the proper physical security in the schools than the need to have armed personnel. Throughout the interviews, the principals spoke of physical security and communication as priorities for the security and safety of the students and faculty.

## Concerns

As mentioned earlier, although the title of the study is *School Shootings and Principals' Perception of Armed Personnel in an Educational Setting*, school principals interviewed found that their main concern was not an outside active shooter like Adam Lanza from the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14, 2012 (Barron, 2012) or an inside active shooter like Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the student shooters from Columbine High School (Cullen, 2009). A serious concern for the safety and security of their students, teachers, and faculty were the parents.

Ms. Jansen commented on this concern:

Prior to our new administration a couple of years ago, parents had carte blanche. They could just walk around the building, so we implemented that they had to come into the main office to get a hall pass first.

I mentioned to the parents they have to make an appointment. We hold all conferences here in the main office conference room. If a parent wants to sit in a child's classroom, we make it for a short period of time and an administrator goes with him. We don't just let them go by themselves. Before and after school we have two security guards at certain locations and the administrators pick up the other locations. All locations are covered, and if we see parents going towards a student, we stop them right there. We tell them you can't talk to someone else's child. You can set an appointment to talk to the parents, but you can't talk to the child alone (July 3, 2014).

Another principal, Ms. Browning said, "Parents come in very irate and over-excited or become threatening towards our staff" (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Lund spoke regarding problems with parental custody,

In regard to custodial issues, when the teacher tells a parent, “You are not allowed to take the child because of the custody papers,” the parent is often abusive to the teacher. We have issues like that on an ongoing basis (July 3, 2014).

To clearly depict the concerns of principals regarding the parents, one of the principals, Ms. Jansen, emphasized her concerns when she spoke of an incident in her school:

We had an incident where two parents were here because their children had fought the day before. We had another parent meeting prior to their meeting. They were just sitting in the hallway, and the next thing I know they’re both on the floor fighting.

Ms. Jansen proceeded to detail their policy to avoid a parent becoming violent or causing violence within the school:

[What] we decided to do here in our building was, if a parent wanted to speak to a teacher, he had to make an appointment and then the meeting was held in the main office conference room. Therefore, there is someone here, and security is right by the front door if needed. If we saw that a parent was agitated, then an administrator definitely sat in on that meeting. If not, we gave the teacher and the parent the option whether or not they wanted an administrator to sit in on the meeting. I have sat in on meetings, and it has escalated on both parts so right then we have to intervene (July 3, 2014).

The principal concern regarding parents' actions is such a great concern to the principals interviewed that Ms. Browning felt she did not get the proper support from the school district initially. She added that the district did respond later to the incident with physical security upgrades and providing armed personnel, a police officer:

From the school's perspective I don't feel that the administrators are fully supported from the central office when it comes to outsiders causing problems. When an irate parent comes in and threatens harm, there are other school districts that in that situation would possibly ban the parent from returning to the school for threatening a staff member. I find that here that same protocol is not always followed. I think there should be some kind of protocol in place here for situations like this. I think in certain areas depending on what happens, there are little SOP's (Standard Operating Procedures) for dealing with that (July 3, 2014).

The same principals that were interviewed also addressed their concerns with the bullying aspect within the school. Ms. Browning put the concerns for bullying, in this way:

Well, let me first start by saying that one of the most concerning acts of violence that happen with our kids is more from the bullying aspect. We find that some information that comes to us in terms of bullying comes from a secondary source rather than the victim. It's not until we actually begin to question a victim after information has been presented to us that the victim does explain to us their position. We have times when a victim might be afraid that somebody is going to retaliate against them. That is one of my biggest concerns.



And the second biggest concern is the after-effect of the psychological issues that a student might experience after going through an episode of bullying (July 3, 2014).

Another concern revealed through the process of the interviews was that of substitute teachers. However, it was not in reference to the substitute being a possible perpetrator, but that the substitute is not trained or familiar with the safety policies and procedures.

Ms. Lund said of her concern, “The substitutes are not trained, so they don’t know the policy and procedures or the safety in place and that’s a problem.

Mr. Blaine agreed:

[a] concern that I have are substitutes in the building because they are not used to the building, and they do not know the exit procedures are. My concern is when a staff member is not here, a substitute teacher does not know what the proper procedure is (July 8, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge explained as follows:

In terms of a substitute in the building, you can’t have substitutes keep [classroom] keys. One of the things that we put in place is that we tell [the substitutes], “Your door is locked in and out if there is a lockdown. All you have to do is close the door. You don’t have to bother with the lock” (July 14, 2014).

When the issue of mental health and an active shooter was brought up by a principal it was limited to an outsider coming into the building. Mr. Blaine explained:

I know the faculty; they are nervous that if there was a shooter in the building, like an active shooter, who is going to be able to disarm the shooter, or who is

going to speak to this person, hopefully to get him to put the weapon down and not injure anyone? (July 8, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge referenced self defense:

If we can do some kind of self-defense training and you see a gunman and the gunman comes towards you with the gun pointing at you, this way you can do those types of things. I believe we could benefit from something like that (July 14, 2014).

Ms. Cullen expressed his concerns:

I'm concerned in terms of an outsider coming in, that we are not prepared to deal with someone in that capacity. We're vigilant, we have eyes, but we don't have anything to stop someone that is adamant or set on coming in; and if they're going after someone, we don't have the ability to stop them.

Besides naturally calling the police, we don't have anything in place if someone came in armed. We have drills like active shooter and securing the building; but if someone came in, we are not prepared, as a school, to stop them or to prevent them if they are adamant about committing a crime (July 17, 2014).

Another principal, Mr. Frazier, focused on the attitudes of the students:

The students ask all the time; they're not stupid, "Oh, you have security guards here, but they don't have weapons." They've said to me many times, "What's going to happen if somebody gets in the building?" You want to give a politically correct response, but in a way they're correct. If somebody gets in here with a weapon, all we can do is lock the building down the best we can.

## **Armed Personnel**

The participants, for this study, principals and vice principals, in the school district of the City of Paterson, an urban environment with high crime and low socioeconomic status, were all informed of the title of the study, *School Shootings and Principals' Perception of Armed Personnel in an Educational Setting*. However, all 12 principals were taken by surprise when asked, "What personnel should be armed, if any?"

Ms. Temple paused, thought about the question and said, "This is a very difficult decision," and paused again to think about the question (June 30, 2014).

Mr. Reilly said, "That's a tough one," paused and continued, "I come from a district where some schools had armed personnel, some schools did not; that depends on not only the area but the population of the school." Then he repeated with great thought, "That's a tough one" (July 8, 2014).

Ms. Jansen, when asked who should be armed, answered, "If we're going to have someone armed and right now we have a retired police officer, and it's funny because I never thought about the fact that he was armed; just recently we had that conversation, and I realized it" (July 3, 2014).

Eleven of the 12 participants identified only police officers or retired police officers to be allowed to be armed in their school. One principal, Ms. Temple, was adamant that at this time, although she was still pondering whether armed personnel were appropriate in an educational setting, she did not support having any person in a school carrying a weapon. Ms. Temple said, "I am not one to like having any kind of firearms around children; but I also understand that part of society and law enforcement has to

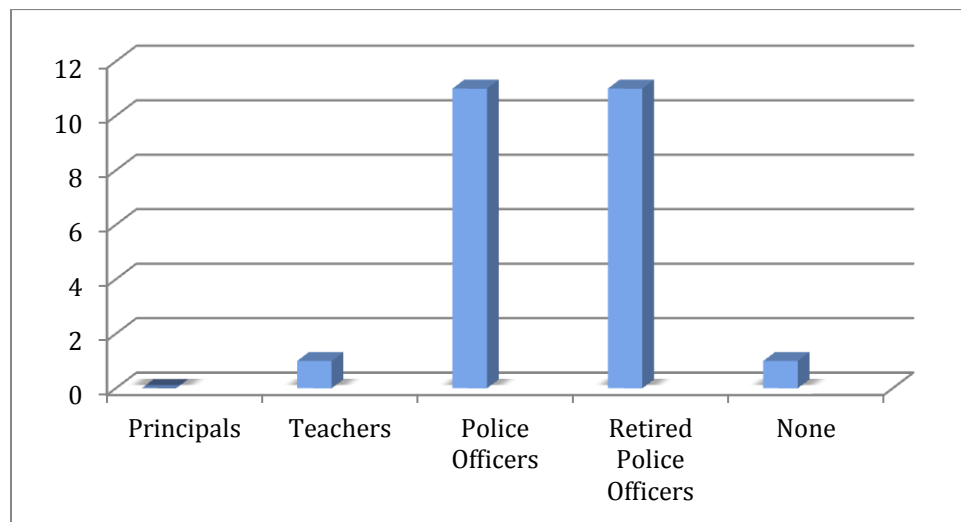
have protection and they carry arms, and it's visible. I don't know what the place for armed personnel in the building is" (June 30, 2014).

Another Principal, Ms. Rutledge, said she felt comfortable with a teacher being armed, I think that one teacher in the building should be armed and I have, if that ever were the case, I have the person in mind" (July 14, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge was further asked about the teacher she would pick:

"Each building should have at least one armed teacher, but that person would have to pass the test. I'm not a psychologist to say, but it would have to be somebody you know would be the one, and it could be that I'm picking this one teacher and after she goes thorough the test, she's not the one." However, Ms. Rutledge did not support other staff, including herself, being armed, and did support police officers and retired police officers being armed in a school (July 14, 2014).

**Principals' Preference on Armed Personnel**



*Figure 7. Principals' Preference on Armed Personnel*

When the question came up of whether having armed personnel in a school is a positive or negative, 11 Of the 12 teachers found it to be a positive experience, reminding the researcher that the armed personnel would be a police officer or retired police officer. One principal, Ms. Temple, said she had no opinion at this time because she has not been in a school that had armed police personnel (June 30, 2014).

Ms. Jansen brought up an interesting perspective for having armed police officers or retired police officers in schools:

It's been positive in the sense that he has made good relationships with our older students, and he can pick up on things that we may not be able to pick up on. He's been privy to things that we may not have been privy to. He might come and tell us there was a shooting the other night and it involves such and such. There are a few of our students that are in that family which we would never have associated with them (July 3, 2014).

When further asked about the perceptions of armed personnel in schools, Ms. Jansen commented as follows:

Parents were concerned, the staff was concerned, they were split. It was like 50% were saying I feel safer if I know they are there. Those are like our vigilant kind of teachers. The other teachers were, like, we have been doing pretty well without them. I don't think we need to add any handguns here (July 3, 2014)."

Mr. Frazier found that police officers and retired police officers are positive for the school. However, he expressed the concerns of the parents. "Parents might have a problem in the beginning. They'll think we have a jail mentality here in the school" (July 15, 2014).

Ms. Browning had a different experience:

Where we had young males who had violent histories, there would be times when the officer present would have to intercede for us . . . There were times when our young men did test them, knowing that they were police officers.

However, Ms. Browning came away from this experience finding it to be positive, “I saw that work as a negative, but as time has gone on, students have grown to accept police here.” She added, “The only comments that I have heard have been positive comments in terms of that it was needed, [and] we should’ve had it here” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Lund found that armed police officers or retired police officers bring a different perspective with their professional knowledge. Ms. Lund said, “They can de-escalate the situation better, know when to intervene” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Lund added, “After the shooting occurred [Sandy Hook Elementary, December 14, 2012] there were a lot of meetings that occurred because of safety and fear. They [faculty] are in favor of armed security in the school; 90% were in favor of armed security in the school.” However, when the question was brought up to the parents and community, the response was different. Ms. Lund said, “We did have a discussion about that at our PTO meeting. They didn’t see it as a protective thing; they would prefer no [armed personnel]” (July 3, 2014).

When referring to the students, Mr. Blaine said, “I feel students, the upper grade students, would feel more comfortable. I know the lower grade kids are a little more nervous and scared.” However, Mr. Blaine noticed that the attitudes of the younger students had become positive. Mr. Blaine added, “I’ve noticed that when they see a police officer, they feel better because we have had police officers come into the building

and speak to them, and you can see their attitude is very positive towards them. They know that they are good people, here to help us, here to protect us” (July 8, 2014).

While Mr. Reilly found having armed police officers or retired police officers as being positive, he added that an armed police officer in a uniform can also give the perception of an unsafe school:

I think that when you have someone that is uniformed and armed, I think that can have a negative impact. It could have a negative impact to visitors who wonder what is going on in the school. Why does that school have to have a uniformed officer with a gun?

Mr. Reilly found police officers and retired police officers as positive. However, he added, “Not uniformed is the best way, I think, to go about it personally” (July 8, 2014).

The principals interviewed found that having armed personnel in an educational setting is acceptable as long as the armed personnel are either police officers or retired police officers. Ms. Temple was the only principal who did not want armed personnel in the schools. However, she added, “I also understand that part of society and law enforcement have to have protection, and they carry arms and it’s visible. I don’t know what the place for armed personnel in the building is” (June 30, 2014). However, she viewed police officers and retired police officers in a positive light.

## **Mental Health**

As part of the research, the principals were asked, “Are mental health initiatives part of your strategy to create a safe school environment?” The principals again were taken aback by this question and added to the study with their responses.

Ms. Temple answered, “Absolutely, it has to be. That’s one of the resources that is so important in dealing with the advocacy piece with the students, the mental health piece. You have your guidance counselors, you have your child study team, you have your external stakeholders, your community support, depending on what is needed by the child and the family (June 30, 2014).

Like most of the other principals, Ms. Temple recognized the importance of identifying all the stakeholders in providing a safe, secure, and healthy educational environment to her students, with mental health being one of the components.

Although mental health initiatives were not identified by the principals as a policy or procedure of the school district or the NJDOE, this study has identified the school principals’ use of the school child study team, school psychologist, school substance abuse coordinator (SAC) and guidance counselors to address student behavioral problems.

Ms. Browning, during her interview, answered the question in this manner:

Yes, we make use of our SAC, which is the Substance Abuse Coordinator in our school. He serves a dual capacity. He works with students that may be affected by drug-related incidents or have that as part of the environment somewhere at home, but he also works with our young men, especially those who have exhibited acts of violence, and counsels them and gives them strategies on handling things differently. That goes back to my first question where we try to work with the victims as well as the perpetrator. It’s just limiting as to how often we can have students interact with our SAC because our SAC is not always here with us. He’s only here twice a week. We make good use of him.



Ms. Browning added the following:

We also make use of our child study team. We have the school psychologist and school social worker, who are only here twice a week. In a school that has a number of serious issues, it is very difficult to spread certain students out with people that are not consistently here. Our guidance counselor mentors a group of students who might be sharing similar issues and she works with them. Primarily she deals with our girls and our SAC primarily deals with our young men.

Another principal, Ms. Sayer, added to the resources that they have acquired to deal with mental health behavioral problems. Ms. Sayers said, “Anytime a student is even suspected or accused of that type of behavior [bullying], that student, whether or not I think the student is guilty, I immediately refer that student to the HIB specialist for some conversation and counseling (July 8, 2014).

In addition to the HIB specialist, we do have social workers in the building; we have a psychologist. If I suspend the child for their behavior, I always say to that parent, “When that child comes back, I would like the child to speak with me,” and, if necessary, I will refer the child to one of the counselors and perhaps they can talk to the child about that behavior (July 8, 2014).

Of the 12 principals asked this question concerning the mental health initiative, three principals answered “no.” They explained how they used their personnel as resources to deal with the mental health/behavioral problems they confront.

Ms. Lund was asked this question and was taken aback. Ms. Lund said, “I believe they [mental health initiatives] are needed tremendously. Are they part of my strategy?

No, as they are not funded. However, that is the component that is most needed here in this school, I think in Paterson schools in general” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Lund went on to add to this subject:

We do have [counseling programs], and it’s covered by insurance. Through the district [counseling] is given free to parents and students that cannot afford it, but we definitely have programs. We have one program where they actually come to your home if you have no means of getting [to the counseling]. We have a program at St. Joseph’s Hospital. We have some students who at times say they don’t want to live; their life is horrible. We have a crisis team that comes in from St. Joe’s. If the parent cannot bring the student to the hospital, they will actually come and pick up the parent and student, who are not allowed to come back to the building until they’re cleared by the doctor (July 3, 2014).

One of the principals spoke of the issues that surround mental health, specifically regarding the concerns for violation of privacy and its legal repercussions. Mr. Frazier explained:

We have our guidance counselor and we have our child study team, so whenever there is a situation like those that we mentioned before, for example the kids that brought in that grenade last year, they’re on the radar of the child study team, and we have weekly meetings.

There’s a limit to what we can do. For example, in a situation last year we wanted to make sure that a student went for a psychological evaluation before he could return to school. Legal said that that wasn’t possible, that we couldn’t require a psychiatric evaluation. Then the situation last year with [a different]

student threatening to shoot up the school, he had to go on permanent bedside instruction and was required to get a psychiatric evaluation (July 15, 2014).

Mr. Frazier echoed a concern of other principals such as Ms. Browning whereby the school district was slow in support of her and her staff when it came to the criminal justice system, after an assault.

The principals understood the importance of mental health intervention with students and faculty and using their available resources to address any behavioral problems.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the dilemma principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education. The study interviewed 12 urban principals of elementary schools grades between kindergarten and eighth grade to identify themes that would further the study of understanding the principals' perceptions on school shootings and armed personnel in a school setting.

As a result of the research interviews with the principals, six emergent themes developed to further the study: (1) communication, (2) policy and procedures, (3) physical security, (4) concerns, (5) armed personnel, and (6) mental health.

Although the title of the research revolves around school shootings and principals' perceptions on having armed personnel in the schools, the subject of armed personnel did not become a major factor during the interviews. Eleven of the 12 principals identified only police officers and retired police officers in a positive light in

regard to armed personnel in the schools. Only one of the 12 principals felt that no person should be armed in a school. However, she admitted that she has not worked in a school with armed personnel; and due to the current environment, she has been considering if a police officer or retired police officer would provide a more safe and secure environment in the schools.

The principals identified physical security of the school as a major component in keeping the students and faculty safe and secure. Physical security of the building, specifically door locks and buzzers/bells, became a recurring theme in the interviews that would provide a safer environment for school students.

However, of the six themes identified by the principals for this study, the one theme every principal identified with in providing a safe and secure environment for the students and faculty was policies and procedures. The principals identified knowing and practicing the policies and procedures on active shooter, lockdown procedures, shelter in place, fire drills, and bomb threats, as valuable tools in providing a safe and secure environment for the students and faculty. The principals further included procedures on allowing outside personnel into the schools and a sign-in procedure that would control and identify all persons in the school.

Of the emergent themes identified in this study, communication with the students and faculty was the most prominent of all. Principals identified the importance of having an open communication between the student and faculty as well as the faculty members with the administration and specifically in developing trust.

The principals further identified the importance of being able to identify the behavior of the students and faculty members who needed assistance and the importance

of having training to develop the skill to identify behavioral cues of troubled students or faculty.

Another emergent theme that was revealed in this study is the mental health aspect. The principals interviewed identified school personnel such as the guidance counselors as a school resource regarding mental health. Although the principals admitted needing access to mental health professionals to be able to deal with identified behavioral problems, they have been resourceful to use the personnel available to refer and assist students with behavioral problems.

Finally, the principals identified their concerns regarding a safe and secure educational environment. Although the title of this study, which all principals interviewed were aware of, was *School Shootings and Principals' Perception of Armed Personnel in an Educational Environment*, the principals interviewed identified the parents as their major concern in providing a safe and secure environment. Too often parents have responded to the school agitated, assaultive, and abusive, requiring security or police intervention.

Although the thought of an active shooter situation is always in the forefront of the principals' concerns, their perception did not focus on a rampage shooting, but instead on more pragmatic concerns that affect the safety and security of students and faculties on a daily basis.

## **Chapter V**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This study examined the perceptions that school principals in inner city schools have regarding having armed personnel within their schools and perception towards how it affects the learning environment for both students and faculty.

The study referenced school shootings throughout the country, tragedies that deeply resonated throughout the education community and touched every person in this country. One was the Columbine shooting where Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, two students of Columbine High School, planned and executed a horrific shooting spree, killing 12 students and one teacher before they committed suicide (Cullen, 2009). More recently we are reminded of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting where Adam Lanza, who was not a student, killed twenty (20) first grade students and four (4) faculty members before killing himself (Sedensky, 2013).

This study reviewed the current literature involving school shootings and the safety options available to principals, who are at the center of this study. Through interviews of principals in an urban district with low SES and high crime, themes emerged regarding school safety and security.

#### **Summary of Findings**

As part of this study, the research reviewed the school shootings controversy available through the current literature. Burns and Crawford (2003) identify an area of controversy, moral panic. They described that when society as a whole feels threatened, society, through their political representatives, overreacts to the events.

The review of the literature further identified the controversy of having armed personnel in the schools. The controversy reviewed through the literature spanned opinions that ranged from everyone allowed to be armed in a school to no one allowed to carry a gun in a school.

The literature considered the types of threats for which an educational environment has to be prepared, such as inside threats involving students and faculty members to outside threats involving previous students, parents, gangs, abusive spouses, or stalkers. Threats also include terrorism on soft targets such as schools, school property, and school buses.

This study interviewed 12 elementary (K-8) school principals from the City of Paterson, an urban school district in New Jersey. The data gathered through these interviews were important in furthering the research into school shootings and principals' perception of armed personnel in an educational setting. The principals interviewed were candid in their answers to the interview questions.

As a result of the interviews conducted for this study, the research has identified six emergent themes based on the principals' perspectives: (1) communication, (2) policy and procedures, (3) physical security, (4) concerns, (5) armed personnel, and (6) mental health.

Every school principal in the Paterson Public School District was aware of the problems that an urban community faces, as well as the personal challenges with which their students must deal, including violence in their community.

## **Research Questions**

In order to properly conduct this study, a series of research questions were developed to direct the study and produce the necessary data for analysis. Discussion of the findings for each research question follows.

### **Research Question 1**

Do inner city school principals perceive the safety threat to be from within the school or outside the school?

As this research indicated through interviews, the principals overwhelmingly have identified their greatest safety threat to come from outside the school and specifically from the parents. However, the principals did not identify the parents as potential shooters but rather as potentially violent when agitated. Principals cited specific examples such as parents fighting each other in the school and threatening teachers.

Ms. Browning said, “Parents come in very irate and overexcited or become threatening towards our staff” (July 3, 2014).

While Ms. Lund spoke regarding the problems with parental custody and parents being abusive with the teachers when they are informed that “they cannot take the child because of custody papers” (July 3, 2014).

Throughout the study the principals attributed having a safe environment within the school through open communication with the students and faculty. The study revealed communication as the most prominent emergent theme. The principals were consistent on the importance of building trust with the students and staff through their ability to properly communicate with them.



The principals further recognized that the students and faculty communicate through their behavior, and being able to identify troubled students and/or faculty and address their problems before they escalate is a crucial part of school safety.

## **Research Question 2**

How do school principals in one urban New Jersey school district address school safety for the students and faculty?

The principals in this study have identified both physical security and policy and procedures as their greatest priorities in providing a safe school for their students and faculty. They placed greater importance ensuring they had cameras, door locks, a buzzer/bell system and a security guard to deal with people from the outside coming into the building unannounced than in their concern of an active shooter. However, they were not unaware of the dangers of an active shooter. The principals relied on their policies and procedures: active shooter, lockdown, and shelter in place. The policy that was most important to all principals interviewed was ensuring that any person entering the building sign in and be announced or escorted to the main office, a procedure that this researcher, no matter what my credentials are, had to follow every time I entered a school or school facility.

Mr. Frazier said, “I’m very concerned again, about the building safety piece . . . I think the buzzer system is a big piece, other than having the security guard stationed in front at all times” (July 15, 2014).

Ms. Lund said of the buzzer system, “I would like to have our doors buzzed into.” Ms. Lund added, “Cameras, we don’t have cameras . . . 90% [of teachers] were in favor of armed security, 100% of them wanted cameras” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge echoed the statements of Ms. Lund. Ms. Rutledge said, “We don’t have a camera . . . our security in the front desk monitors who’s coming in” (July 14, 2014).

Mr. Blaine addressed it as his first concern, “We have no cameras here; that is my first concern” (July 8, 2014).

Regarding their policies and procedures, every principal used his or her ability to follow the school district and NJDOE policy and procedure on active shooter, lockdown, shelter in place, and sign in to the main office.

Ms. Browning said, “Our teachers and other faculty members are well trained. The administrative team is well trained. Our safety plan is reviewed every year” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Rutledge said, “One of the things that I put into place is that I do not allow more than five adults in the building at a time. No one can get upstairs until nine o’clock” (July 14, 2014).

The principals interviewed further added that through open dialogue and communication that they have created a safe educational environment, understanding that the students have an important role in the school security.

Mr. Morgan said, “We try to make sure that we have a conversation on how to be safe but also foster that conversation to happen at home” (July 9, 2014).

Principals like Ms. Temple, expressed the importance of communication between students and faculty. She said, “As the administrator, I am dependent on the teachers being able to establish rapport or trust with students.”

### **Research Question 3**

How do inner city school principals perceive the presence, or knowledge, of armed personnel as influencing, or deterring, potential school violence?

The City of Paterson public school district currently has two types of armed personnel in the school system. Police officers of the Paterson Police Department are assigned there during their off-duty hours and are paid by the school district. These police officers are assigned by the Paterson Police Department based on availability and seniority (personal communication, July 4, 2014).

The second type of armed personnel in the school system is the retired police officers that are currently employed and paid by the school district. Federal law 18 USC 926C authorizes retired police officers to carry firearms. These retired police officers are allowed to carry firearms with the permission of the district superintendent only after having gone through school resource officer training (personal communication, August 1, 2014).

Eleven of the 12 participants expressed that only police officers or retired police officers be allowed to be armed in their school.

One of the principals, Ms. Lund, found that armed police officers or retired police officers bring a different perspective with their professional knowledge. Ms. Lund said, “They can de-escalate the situation better, know when to intervene” (July 3, 2014).

Ms. Jansen agreed:

It’s been positive in the sense that he has made good relationships with our older students and can pick up on things that we may not be able to pick up. He might

come and tell us there was a shooting the other night and it involved a few of our students in that family, which we would not have known (July 3, 2014).

One of the principals did not support having any armed personnel in the schools; she admitted that due to the fact that she had never worked in a school with a police officer or retired police officer, and with the current atmosphere of school shootings, she was undecided. Ms. Temple said, “I am not one to like having any kind of firearms around children; but I also understand that part of society and law enforcement has to have protection, and they carry arms and it’s visible. I don’t know what the place for armed personnel in the building is at this point in time” (June 30, 2014).

#### **Research Question 4**

Do school principals perceive students and faculty to be safer with armed personnel present within the school, or do they perceive armed personnel to create a threatening environment?

Since armed personnel are limited to just a few elementary schools, the response from the principals regarding any comments of students and/or faculty was limited. Only four of the 12 principals interviewed had conversations with faculty members regarding having, or the possibility of having, armed personnel in their school. The four principals did respond that the faculty members had indicated having armed personnel, police or retired police officers, would be positive, especially in regard to the safety and security of the school.

In terms of students, only four of the 12 principals interviewed had conversations with students regarding having, or the possibility of having, armed personnel in their school. Three of the four principals did respond that the students had indicated having

armed personnel, police or retired police officers, would be positive. One principal said, “Students had inquired about the armed police officers but more from curiosity” (D. H. Reilly, July 8, 2014).

Mr. Blaine said, “We did have positive comments made that every building should have a police officer and even if not in the building, walking the perimeter of the building” (July 8, 2014).

Mr. Frazier said, “The students ask all the time; they’re not stupid, “Oh, you have security guards here, but they don’t have weapons.” They’ve said to me many times, “What’s going to happen if somebody gets into the building?’ ” (July 15, 2014).

Ms. Cullen said, “I was in one school and there was a shooting outside, and the students were more comfortable after the event happened. They had a police officer in the building and felt an extra layer of security and protection” (July 17, 2014).

### **Discussion**

The title of this study is *School Shootings and Principals’ Perception of Armed Personnel in an Educational Setting*. The purpose of the study was to explore the dilemma principals face in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education. With this in mind, the researcher reviewed the related literature on this subject and conducted interviews with 12 urban school principals to further the research and knowledge on school shootings and armed personnel in an educational setting.

Even though the subject for this study focused on school shootings and armed personnel, the principals interviewed took a more pragmatic approach to their

responsibilities and concerns for the security and safety of their students and faculty. The principals were aware of the dangers of an active shooter, but the conversation regarding an active shooter revolved around school preparedness through drills and ensuring that the policies and procedures of lockdowns were properly followed.

After a major incident that captures the nation's attention, such as the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, the public reaction and outrage requires an immediate response to deal with the horrific event. Burns and Crawford (2003) refer to this response as *moral panic*, which is defined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (as cited in Burns & Crawford, 2003): "Moral panic appears when a substantial portion of society feels that particular evildoers pose a threat to the moral order of society" (p. 123). Moral panic causes a reaction, specifically through the political establishment, to take action through punitive action, incarceration, extended sentences, and zero tolerance policies, (Burns & Crawford, 2003).

The principals interviewed showed that they or their policies do not adhere to moral panic. The principals' perceptions, actions, and policies are more pragmatic and relevant to the circumstances of their educational environment, an urban school district. They are aware of their urban setting and the problems that come with education in an inner city with a population with a low socioeconomic status.

Burns and Crawford (2003) found that many schools are more concerned with school security than the students are. School security experts caution school officials and law enforcement from placing all their concentration on active shooters and not having an all-inclusive program that deals with school violence, including active shooters and suicide (Ujifusa, 2012).

The principals interviewed throughout this study had indicated that the process used in the schools remains comprehensive in ensuring that the students are safe from an active shooter, an irate parent, gang members, custody issues, etc. The principals did not make any comments or suggestions that their focus was solely on active shooters. In fact, the opposite was true; they focused on security problems that were of practical concern, especially in an inner city school.

The principals interviewed were more inclined to speak of the physical security of the buildings to ensure the safety of the students and faculty. When asked about their concerns, the principals overwhelmingly were most concerned with irate parents and crime in the neighborhood that may affect the students and faculty when off the school grounds.

Table 9

*Keywords by Participants*

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Times Used</b>
• Doors	75
• Parents	35
• Bullying	27
• Guns	23
• Behavior	19
• Conversation	17
• Counseling	14
• Buzzer/Bell	13
• Trust	11
• Shootings	8
• Active Shooter	7

Through the examination of the emergent themes, a picture develops of the principals' focus on the safety and security of their schools. The principals identified

communication between students and faculty 57 times; and if you include the mental health comments 23 times, it would be 80 times, while the subject of armed personnel was only discussed by the principals as a process to keep their schools safe and secure, 24 times (Figure 6).

The principals interviewed recognized the importance of having an open and trusting relationship with the students and faculty. They recognized that communication with all concerned stakeholders, students, and faculty, creates a safe environment conducive to learning. Wilson (2013) found that school principals must encourage an environment where the students develop a relationship with all members of the faculty and staff, from the teacher, nurse, and bus driver to security personnel, a belief and policy on which each principal interviewed concurred.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has estimated that the likelihood of a child dying in a school is about one in a million (Cullen, 2009). While 16% of school age children have seriously considered suicide, 13% have created a plan to commit suicide, and 8% have attempted to commit suicide, 4,600 a year succeed in committing suicide (CDC, 2014).

These are real numbers with real school children that cannot be ignored. Sanchez (as cited by Burns and Crawford, 2003, p. 126), studied school shootings between 1992 and 1998 and found an average of 38 shootings per year. Although any number of school shootings is unacceptable and we should be vigilant against them, suicide prevention becomes more relevant to the conversation, specifically because of the comparatively large percentage of children contemplating, attempting, and succeeding in committing suicide and the relationship of suicide with an active shooter. In their research on



rampage school shootings, Newman et al. (2004) found school shooters to be suicidal and that they turn their suicidal motivations homicidal, specifically outward towards the group and the institution they perceive made them an outcast.

The school principals interviewed spoke of the need for additional mental health attention in the schools. Ms. Temple said, “You have your guidance counselors, you have your child study team, you have your external stakeholders, your community support, depending on what is needed by the child and the family” (June 30, 2014).

Knowing the importance of identifying and dealing with students or staff with mental health issues, the principals spoke of their available resources. Ms. Browning said, “We make use of our SAC, which is the Substance Abuse Coordinator in our school. He serves a dual capacity.” She added, “We have the school psychologist and school social worker who are only here twice a week” (July 3, 2014).

Identifying school children who are susceptible to suicide would be an incredible resource for their mental health and overall stability, while at the same time helping the rampage shooter before he or she is marginalized and made an outcast looking to commit suicide through homicide, or suicide by cop (Newman et al., 2004).

The school principals interviewed overwhelmingly identified communication between students and faculty as the most important aspect of school safety.

Ms. Temple explained as follows:

As the administrator, I am dependent on the teachers being able to establish that rapport or that trust with students. In doing so it would also facilitate the student being honest and forthcoming with teachers. The administration also needs to establish a rapport with the student body (June 30, 2014).

Mr. Morgan added, “We try to foster an environment of openness between the student and the teachers so they feel comfortable; and if they see a threat, immediately they have an access to let the authority [know]” (July 9, 2014).

Just as the principals of the City of Paterson Public School District have stated, faculty and students need to build trust to be able to identify when there is a problem. Schools need to be proactive through the education of their faculty “in recognizing and diffusing potentially violent situations and developing appropriate relationships with students” (Smith & Smith, 2006, p. 41).

Ms. Cullen said, “Our children here in the city have become so accustomed to a level of violence that they have a sense of immunity to it” (July 17, 2014).

Trotter (2005) found that in order to prevent school shootings, schools have to focus on preventing school violence by addressing bullying, harassment, and assaults. He added the need for schools to focus on the real issue of school bullying and harassment as a way to prevent school violence. The principals interviewed for this study agreed that students that are identified as bullying another student have to be referred immediately to the HIB specialist (Ms. Sayers, July 8, 2014).

The United States Secret Service has identified bullying as a factor that creates “isolation and fear” and could lead to behavioral problems (Wilson, 2013, p. 2), while Bloom (2008) found isolation and bullying or being bullied the leading traits in rampage school shootings.

One of the school principals identified a second grader and a fourth grader with knives in school; and when they were confronted with the knives, they admitted it was

because they were acting out the movie *Scream* (Richard Blaine, July 8, 2014), a rated R movie of knife-wielding killers (Newman et al, 2004).

Grossman and Christiansen (2012) found that violent video games are desensitizing groups of young people that have been marginalized and isolated. Violent video games are creating a virtual reality in which people are killed for points, and children playing this game are less likely to empathize with others.

Crimando (2014) in his article “From ‘Shots Fired’ to ‘Shooter Down’ and Beyond” in the *Disaster Resource Guide*, recommends a comprehensive approach to active shooters called Comprehensive Active Shooter Incident Management (CASIM). This comprehensive approach involves four phases: (1) prevention-mitigation—to reduce the likelihood of an event; (2) preparedness—training and drills; (3) response—active shooter, lockdowns; and (4) recovery—psychological first aid, employee assistance program. Using a comprehensive approach to the issue of a school shooting can better prepare school administrators, faculty, and staff to prevent, react, and recover if an event were to occur.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to explore the dilemma principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education. The study found that the principals of the Paterson School District did not adhere to the concept of moral panic as a result of the national media attention to school shootings and rampage shooting, but took a comprehensive approach to the safety and security of the school children and faculty in their schools.

The school principals prioritized their school safety needs through four processes: (1) focusing on having an open communication between all stakeholders, students, parents, teachers, administrators, faculty and community; (2) ensuring that the policy and procedures of the school district and the NJDOE are followed, especially the conducting of drills; (3) ensuring that physical security, cameras, door locks, buzzers, bells, security guard, are in place (however, not all buildings had the necessary physical security); and (4) ensuring that any student with mental health issues that include behavioral problems, is directed to an appropriate resource.

This study identified several concerns principals had in relation to the safety and security of the students and faculty. The primary concern mentioned was irate parents coming into the school. The principals gave multiple examples of parents becoming belligerent when confronting faculty or other parents in the school. Another concern that the principals identified was students bullying or being bullied. The principals identified programs in effect to address this major problem such as the HIB program, and training for the students regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

The principals interviewed from the Paterson School District were adamant about the importance of developing a relationship with open communication between the school children and the teachers. This study identified that the principals considered communication between all persons to be paramount in providing a safe and secure educational environment. They all adhered to the belief that the best way to protect their school, students, and faculty is through building trust and developing rapport.

Although the study focused on school shootings, armed personnel were their last priority regarding school safety. The principals directed their answers to school safety

through building trust with the students and staff, following the safety policies and procedures, conducting the appropriate drills, and ensuring the building is physically secured.

The study identified that 11 of the 12 principals interviewed were supportive of having armed personnel in the schools. However, the armed personnel they supported were police officers or retired police officers. The one principal that did not support having any armed personnel in the schools did not want any personnel armed in the school. However, the school principals that supported the police officers and retired police officers in the schools were very supportive and found them to have a positive effect on the safety and security of the schools and towards students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The information obtained from this research may assist administrators and educators, specifically in large, urban schools, to understand some of the reasons associated with school shootings and the dilemma school principals have with the issue of armed personnel within their schools. This research can provide a basis for future research into school shootings and the perceptions of educators regarding armed personnel.

As this study is concluded, future research should be directed at the following:

1. How are students able to deal with the stressors of their environment and how does that manifest in an educational environment?
2. Are police officers or retired police officers assigned to a school properly trained to deal with school children with behavioral and/or emotional problems?

3. Should the police officer or retired police officer assigned to a public school continue to perform his or her duty as law enforcement officer, or should the responsibility change to a hybrid police/social worker status?
4. Are schools becoming more militarized? If so, how does that affect the educational environment?

### **Recommendation for Policy**

As a result of the research conducted for this study and based on prior research, the following policies are recommended:

1. The Federal and State Departments of Education should consider adopting policies that would require the hiring of full time mental health professionals in schools. Research has shown that children with behavioral problems that are not addressed are more likely to be involved in violent acts that will impact their education.
2. Along with the hiring of full time mental health professionals, administrators and faculty should receive training in identifying and properly addressing students and/or faculty members that exhibit emotional and/or behavioral problems affecting their lives or the lives of others. Research has shown that students and faculty members that exhibit signs of emotional and/or behavioral problems can be assisted if identified early and referred for counseling.
3. All personnel authorized by law to be armed with a firearm in an educational setting should be required to receive at a minimum the training received by law enforcement officers. The training should include firearm training, with

annual/semi-annual qualifications, and training in working with students and faculty members that exhibit signs of emotional and/or behavioral problems. Research has shown that school resource officer training is highly recommended by personnel in law enforcement as well as by educators.

### **Recommendation for Practice**

Through the interviews conducted in this study and the review of the policies and procedures of the New Jersey Department of Education and the policies and procedures of the Paterson Public School District, the policies and procedures enacted by the school district have reassured the principals in their role of having their staff prepared in case of an emergency situation.

#### **Paterson Public School District**

1. Establish the following:
  - Policy on the training of security officers, police officers, and retired police officers in identifying behavioral problems.
  - Policy on the training of security officers, police officers, and retired police officers in the handling of troubled students and/or parents.
  - Policy on the training of teachers in identifying behavioral problems.
  - Policy on the training of teachers to address troubled students and/or parents.
2. The school district should ensure that all faculty members are informed of New Jersey's Crime Victim's Bill of Rights and the criminal justice process.

3. The school district should ensure that district staff members will assist a faculty member who has been a victim of a crime through the process of the criminal justice system.
4. The school district should have mental health professionals available for counseling for students and faculty that have been a victim of a crime or where a horrific crime (shooting, murder, suicide) has occurred near the school or to a person from the school.

**Paterson Police Department:**

1. The Paterson Police Department, through its liaison, and consistent with the Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials, should provide training to police officers specifically assigned to the schools in identifying behavioral problems and understanding troubled students and their parents.
2. The Paterson Police Department, through its liaison and consistent with the Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials, should notify the school district liaison of every shooting or homicide within the City of Paterson to ensure that the students that may be affected by the incidents are provided with necessary assistance.

**Reflections**

While the study was limited and focused on principals in only one New Jersey urban city, most active shooter or rampage shooting incidents occur in suburban or rural communities. The principals in this study are aware of the dangers of an active shooter in their school and prepare for the possibility of such an outcome. However, they recognize



that the problems affecting inner city schools in a population with low socioeconomic status revolve around the students, their parents, and the community. The principals realize that the issues of school safety are typically day-to-day problems with multiple variables affecting the students, parents, and faculty.

As a law enforcement officer, an educator, and a parent, I became concerned with the issue of school shootings after Columbine in 1999. Although I was familiar with previous school shootings, including the 1966 University of Texas at Austin shooting by Charles Whitman, the shooting at Columbine High School struck a nerve because of the age of the shooters and their disregard for the lives of their schoolmates, school faculty, and themselves. As a result of this horrific event, I began to follow and study this phenomenon of rampage school shootings more closely.

An important aspect of this study that was revealing to me regarding school violence and in turn potential school shootings is the need for mental health professionals to be available as a resource for school principals. The ability of early detection of behavioral problems and immediate referral to the proper mental health professional is paramount in preventing school shootings and in turn the potential school violence.

Research on school shootings has identified suicide as a common denominator in most school shootings. However, school shootings are such a rare occurrence, although horrific and unfathomable, that the CDC estimates a child having a greater chance of getting struck by lightning (one in a million) than being shot in a school (Cullen, 2009). The CDC estimates that 16% of school age children contemplate suicide, 13% plan to commit suicide, 8% attempt to commit suicide, and approximately 4,600 school age children commit suicide annually (CDC, 2014).

Being proactive and placing a greater emphasis on the behavior and mental health of the students, specifically in regards to signs of depression and suicidal cues, is a greater use of resources than being reactive towards an active shooter, as research has identified a correlation between suicide and active shooters. School administrators, teachers, and staff members must be properly trained to identify emotional and behavioral problems and report them as soon as the information comes to their attention. Early detection and assistance is a proven method to prevent suicide, school violence, and in turn school shootings.

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## **APPENDIX A**

March 24, 2014

Donnie W. Evans, Ed. D.  
State District Superintendant  
Paterson Public Schools  
90 Delaware Avenue  
Paterson, NJ 07503

Dear Dr. Evans,

My name is Richard Reyes; I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services, and a Police Captain with the Paterson Police Department, with 26 years of law enforcement experience.

I am presently working on my dissertation on school shootings and principal's perception of armed personnel in an educational setting. This study is of a qualitative design, which would require interviews of elementary school principals and vice principals, whose response will then be coded, and analyzed.

Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes, with a follow-up interview on a future date based on the data collected, coded and analyzed; interviews can be conducted at the principals or vice principals school, or at a location mutually agreeable by the participant and researcher.

As this is a qualitative study, I would gather data through interviews using questions reviewed and approved by a panel of experts. Each principal or vice principal will receive an informed consent letter explaining the research and the parameters of the study and a demographic questionnaire.

All the participants will be informed that this study is voluntary and the participants may withdraw at any time during the study.

Their participation will be anonymous, with no information recorded identifying the participant with the data. Only the principals or vice principals that return the informed consent letters agreeing to participate in the study will be considered for the interviews and their names and schools withheld.

All of the subject's data will be confidential and securely stored on a USB in a locked secure site within the College of Education and Human Services.

The purpose of this study is to explore the dilemma elementary school principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

If permission is granted to conduct the study with the Paterson school district, I will submit the parameters of the research to the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for their approval. All information will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be released.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration to my request. If you have any questions please feel free to call me anytime at 973-330-7619, or you may contact my Dissertation Advisor Dr. Barbara Strobert at her office at Seton Hall University 973-275-2324.

Sincerely,

  
Richard Reyes

## **APPENDIX B**



# PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Division of Assessment, Planning and Evaluation  
90 Delaware Avenue, Paterson NJ 07503  
Office: (973) 321-0867 Fax: (973) 321-0604

Jazmin Rotger de Parra  
Director of Assessment, Planning and Evaluation  
Email: jparra@paterson.k12.nj.us

Donnie W. Evans, Ed. D.  
State District Superintendent

TO: Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Chief Reform and Innovations Office  
FROM: Jazmin Parra, Director of Assessment, Planning, & Evaluation  
DATE: April 4, 2014  
RE: Research Request

In accordance with district policy 9550, I have reviewed the research request application for the applicant/project referenced below and have determined that the request meets the criteria to conduct research within the Paterson Public School District.

The attached document is being provided for your signature and if you would like to view the request in more depth a copy of the application is being provided as well.

**Researcher/Applicant Name:** Captain Richard Reyes

The purpose of this study is to explore the dilemma elementary school principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

**Project Title:**

**Institutional Affiliation:**

Seton Hall University

☒ I hereby authorize Captain Richard Reyes, to use the Paterson Public School premises to conduct a study entitled.

☒ I hereby authorize Captain Richard Reyes, to recruit subjects for participation in a study entitled.

Dr. Laurie W. Newell  
Chief Reform and Innovations Officer

*Preparing All Children for College and Career*

## **APPENDIX C**



May 28, 2014

Richard Reyes  
182 Vreeland Ave.  
Rutherford, NJ 07070

Dear Mr. Reyes,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved as submitted under expedited review your research proposal entitled "School Violence and Principal's Perception of Armed Personnel in an Educational Setting". The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped Consent Form.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

*In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.*

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Barbara Strobert

**Office of Institutional Review Board**

Presidents Hall • 400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079 • Tel: 973.313.6314 • Fax: 973.275.2361 • [www.shu.edu](http://www.shu.edu)

A HOME FOR THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE SPIRIT

Please review Seton Hall University IRB's Policies and Procedures on website (<http://www.provost.shu.edu/IRB>) for more information. Please note the following requirements:

**Adverse Reactions:** If any untoward incidents or adverse reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to immediately notify in writing the Seton Hall University IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, please communicate your request in writing (with revised copies of the protocol and/or informed consent where applicable and the Amendment Form) to the IRB Director. The new procedures cannot be initiated until you receive IRB approval.

**Completion of Study:** Please notify Seton Hall University's IRB Director in writing as soon as the research has been completed, along with any results obtained.

**Non-Compliance:** Any issue of non-compliance to regulations will be reported to Seton Hall University's IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

**Renewal:** It is the principal investigator's responsibility to maintain IRB approval. A Continuing Review Form will be mailed to you prior to your initial approval anniversary date. **Note:** No research may be conducted (except to prevent immediate hazards to subjects), no data collected, nor any subjects enrolled after the expiration date.

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR  
RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: "School shootings and principals perception of armed personnel in an educational setting."

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:**

In making this application, I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

Richard Reyes

RESEARCHER(S) OR PROJECT DIRECTOR(S)

5/1/14  
DATE

\*\*Please print or type out names of all researchers below signature.  
Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.\*\*

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials and consider them to meet IRB standards.

Dr. Barbara V. Strobert

RESEARCHER'S ADVISOR OR DEPARTMENTAL SUPERVISOR

5/1/14  
DATE

\*\*Please print or type out name below signature\*\*

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the May 2014 meeting.

The application was approved ☒ not approved ☐ by the Committee. Special conditions were ☐ were not ☒ set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

Mary J. Ruzicka, Ph.D.  
DIRECTOR,  
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

5/28/14  
DATE



## **APPENDIX D**

May 2014

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Richard Reyes; I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services. I am presently working on my dissertation on school shootings and principal's perception of armed personnel in an educational setting.

I am also a police captain with the Paterson Police Department assigned to the Office of the Chief of Police; during my 26 year career I have had a close relationship with the Paterson School District and the issues that elementary school principals in urban schools are confronted with.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this study that explores the dilemma elementary school principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

As this is a qualitative study, the data gathered will be through interviews, using questions reviewed and approved by a panel of experts. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes, with a follow-up interview, if necessary, on a future date. Interviews can be conducted at the principal's school, or at a location, mutually agreeable by the participant and researcher.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and the participant may withdraw from the study at anytime. All of the participant's data will be anonymous, confidential and securely stored on a USB in a locked secure site within the Paterson Police Department. Only the researcher will have knowledge of the identity of the participants.

For purposes of anonymity, each principal will receive an Informed Consent Form explaining the research, the parameters of the study and a Demographic Questionnaire. As this study is voluntary only the principals that return the Informed Consent Form and Questionnaire will be considered for the interviews.

If you chose to participate in this study, please complete the Informed Consent Form and Questionnaire provided and return them to me within two weeks in order that the data may be analyzed in a timely fashion. Please use the envelope provided to return the requested documents.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me anytime at 973-330-7619, or you may contact my Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, at her office at Seton Hall University 973-275-2324.

Sincerely,



Richard Reyes

## **APPENDIX E**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

Seton Hall University  
Institutional Review Board

MAY 28 2014

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Approval Date

\_\_\_\_\_, agrees to participate in a dissertation study on "school shootings and principal's perception of armed personnel in an educational setting," conducted by Richard Reyes, a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services.

The purpose of the study is to explore the dilemma elementary school principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

As this is a qualitative study, the data gathered through interviews, using questions reviewed and approved by a panel of experts. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes, with a follow-up interview, if necessary, on a future date; interviews can be conducted at the principal's school, or at a location, mutually agreeable by the participant and researcher. Furthermore, there are no foreseeable risks or discomfort to any participant in this study.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and the participant may withdraw from the study at anytime. All of the participant's data will be anonymous, confidential and securely stored on a USB in a locked secure site within the Paterson Police Department. Only the researcher will have knowledge of the identity of the participants.

There are no direct benefits to the participant for their participation in this study, other than adding to the research on school safety.

The interviews will be recorded for reference purpose only, using a pseudonym to identify the participant, who's entitled to a copy of the recording upon his / her request. The recordings will remain in a locked secure site within the Paterson Police Department, and only the researcher will have access to the recordings, which will be kept for a period of three years.

If you have any questions regarding this research you may contact Richard Reyes, the principal researcher, at 973-330-7619, or you may contact Dr. Barbara Strobert, the Dissertation Advisor at her office at Seton Hall University 973-275-2324, or the Seton Hall University Institutional Board at 973-313-6314.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy  
Jubilee Hall • 400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, NJ 07079 • Tel: 973.761.9397 • Fax: 973.275.2847 • [www.shu.edu](http://www.shu.edu)

Expiration Date

MAY 28 2015

## **APPENDIX F**

May 5, 2014

Grace Giglio  
Norman S. Weir  
152 College Blvd.  
Paterson, N.J. 07501

Dear Principal Giglio,

My name is Richard Reyes; I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services. I am presently working on my dissertation on school shootings and principal's perception of armed personnel in an educational setting.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this study that explores the dilemma elementary school principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

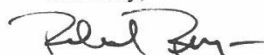
As this is a qualitative study, the data gathered will be through interviews. Based on the Research Questions for this study, I have developed the Interview Questions to be used during the course of the interviews with the participants. However, to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview questions, a panel of experts in the field should review the questions and make recommendations that can add to the research.

Approval for conducting this study has been received from the Paterson School District through Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Chief Reform and Innovations Officer, and will be submitted to the Office of Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University for their approval.

It is with great respect to your profession and experience that I am asking if you could participate in this study through the review of the Interview Questions that I have prepared.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me anytime at 973-330-7619, or you may contact my Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, at her office at Seton Hall University 973-275-2324.

Sincerely,

  
Richard Reyes

May 5, 2014

Jalyn Lyde  
Destiny Academy  
47 State Street  
Paterson, N.J. 07501

Dear Principal Lyde,

My name is Richard Reyes; I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services. I am presently working on my dissertation on school shootings and principal's perception of armed personnel in an educational setting.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this study that explores the dilemma elementary school principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.

As this is a qualitative study, the data gathered will be through interviews. Based on the Research Questions for this study, I have developed the Interview Questions to be used during the course of the interviews with the participants. However, to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview questions, a panel of experts in the field should review the questions and make recommendations that can add to the research.

Approval for conducting this study has been received from the Paterson School District through Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Chief Reform and Innovations Officer, and will be submitted to the Office of Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University for their approval.

It is with great respect to your profession and experience that I am asking if you could participate in this study through the review of the Interview Questions that I have prepared.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me anytime at 973-330-7619, or you may contact my Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, at her office at Seton Hall University 973-275-2324.

Sincerely,

  
Richard Reyes

May 5, 2014

Terrence Williams  
Destiny Academy  
47 State Street  
Paterson, N.J. 07501

Dear Principal Williams,

My name is Richard Reyes; I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services. I am presently working on my dissertation on school shootings and principal's perception of armed personnel in an educational setting.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this study that explores the dilemma elementary school principals have in determining the best approach to provide a safe environment for their students and faculty, while at the same time creating an environment that is conducive to education.


As this is a qualitative study, the data gathered will be through interviews. Based on the Research Questions for this study, I have developed the Interview Questions to be used during the course of the interviews with the participants. However, to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview questions, a panel of experts in the field should review the questions and make recommendations that can add to the research.

Approval for conducting this study has been received from the Paterson School District through Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Chief Reform and Innovations Officer, and will be submitted to the Office of Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University for their approval.

It is with great respect to your profession and experience that I am asking if you could participate in this study through the review of the Interview Questions that I have prepared.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me anytime at 973-330-7619, or you may contact my Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, at her office at Seton Hall University 973-275-2324.

Sincerely,

  
Richard Reyes



## **APPENDIX G**

TABLE 1 - RANDOM DIGITS

11164	36318	75061	37674	26320	75100	10431	20418	19228	91792
21215	91791	76831	58678	87054	31687	93205	43685	19732	08468
10438	44482	66558	37649	08882	90870	12462	41810	01806	02977
36792	26236	33266	66583	60881	97395	20461	36742	02852	50564
73944	04773	12032	51414	82384	38370	00249	80709	72605	67497
49563	12872	14063	93104	78483	72717	68714	18048	25005	04151
64208	48237	41701	73117	33242	42314	83049	21933	92813	04763
51486	72875	38605	29341	80749	80151	33835	52602	79147	08868
99756	26360	64516	17971	48478	09610	04638	17141	09227	10606
71325	55217	13015	72907	00431	45117	33827	92873	02953	85474
65285	97198	12138	53010	94601	15838	16805	61004	43516	17020
17264	57327	38224	29301	31381	38109	34976	65692	98566	29550
95639	99754	31199	92558	68368	04985	51092	37780	40261	14479
61555	76404	86210	11808	12841	45147	97438	60022	12645	62000
78137	98768	04689	87130	79225	08153	84967	64539	79493	74917
62490	99215	84987	28759	19177	14733	24550	28067	68894	38490
24216	63444	21283	07044	92729	37284	13211	37485	10415	36457
16975	95428	33226	55903	31605	43817	22250	03918	46999	98501
59138	39542	71168	57609	91510	77904	74244	50940	31553	62562
29478	59652	50414	31966	87912	87154	12944	49862	96566	48825
96155	95009	27429	72918	08457	78134	48407	26061	58754	05326
29621	66583	62966	12468	20245	14015	04014	35713	03980	03024
12639	75291	71020	17265	41598	64074	64629	63293	53307	48766
14544	37134	54714	02401	63228	26831	19386	15457	17999	18306
83403	88827	09834	11333	68431	31706	26652	04711	34593	22561
67642	05204	30697	44806	96989	68403	85621	45556	35434	09532
64041	99011	14610	40273	09482	62864	01573	82274	81446	32477
17048	94523	97444	59904	16936	39384	97551	09620	63932	03091
93039	89416	52795	10631	09728	68202	20963	02477	55494	39563
82244	34392	96607	17220	51984	10753	76272	50985	97593	34320
96990	55244	70693	25255	40029	23289	48819	07159	60172	81697
09119	74803	97303	88701	51380	73143	98251	78635	27556	20712
57666	41204	47589	78364	38266	94393	70713	53388	79865	92069
46492	61594	26729	58272	81754	14648	77210	12923	53712	87771
08433	19172	08320	20839	13715	10597	17234	39355	74816	03363
10011	75004	86054	41190	10061	19660	03500	68412	57812	57929
92420	65431	16530	05547	10683	88102	30176	84750	10115	69220
35542	55865	07304	47010	43233	57022	52161	82976	47981	46588
86595	26247	18552	29491	33712	32285	64844	69395	41387	87195
72115	34985	58036	99137	47482	06204	24138	24272	16196	04393
07428	58863	96023	88936	51343	70958	96768	74317	27176	29600
35379	27922	28906	55013	26937	48174	04197	36074	65315	12537
10982	22807	10920	26299	23593	64629	57801	10437	43965	15344
90127	33341	77806	12446	15444	49244	47277	11346	15884	28131
63002	12990	23510	68774	48983	20481	59815	67248	17076	78910
40779	86382	48454	65269	91239	45989	45389	54847	77919	41105
43216	12608	18167	84631	94058	82458	15139	76856	86019	47928
96167	64375	74108	93643	09204	98855	59051	56492	11933	64958
70975	62693	35684	72607	23026	37004	32989	24843	01128	74658
85812	61875	23570	75754	29090	40264	80399	47254	40135	69916